



SICKLE CELL AWARENESS MONTH

# SICKLE CELL DISEASE FAST FACTS

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## WHAT IS SICKLE CELL DISEASE?

Sickle cell disease (SCD) is an **inherited red blood cell disorder** that causes the body to make stiff **sickle-shaped red blood cells**, leading to blockages in blood vessels, limiting blood flow, and causing severe pain and other health complications.

## WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

The WHO estimates nearly **100 million people are affected** worldwide with SCD and **over 300,000 children are born every year** with the disease. An estimated **6000 Canadians** are affected by sickle cell disease and approximately **4000 live in Ontario**.

Both parents must have the **sickle cell trait (SCT)** for a child to be born with SCD. Although it can affect anyone, SCD is more common in people with African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, and Indian roots.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

SCD causes **acute and chronic severe pain** and can lead to fatal complications, including **damage to vital organs** and **premature death**. Other complications from sickle cell include anemia, lung damage, infections, kidney damage, vision problems, and strokes.

Treatment of complications often includes antibiotics, pain management, intravenous fluids, blood transfusion, and surgery backed by psychosocial support.

## HOW IS SCD MANAGED?

**Hydroxyurea** (pronounced hye droksee yoor EE a) is a medicine that can decrease several complications of SCD. Daily hydroxyurea reduces the frequency of painful crises and might reduce the need for blood transfusions and hospitalizations. It can also increase your risk of infections. **Blood transfusion** is also a popular disease management therapy.

## CAN IT BE CURED?

SCD can be cured by **bone marrow** or **stem cell transplantation**, but it requires identifying a well-matched (usually a sibling) donor and is performed most commonly in children. The limited availability of matched sibling donors has brought other therapies such as **gene therapy** to the scene.

Visit [www.sicklecellanemia.ca](http://www.sicklecellanemia.ca) to learn more.