

SICKLE CELL TRAIT

FACT SHEET

Hemoglobin is the substance in the body's red blood cells that allow the cells to carry oxygen to all parts of the body. It also gives the cells their color. Every person inherits two genes of hemoglobin, one from each parent.

People with Sickle Cell trait do not have a disease. Individuals with Sickle Cell Trait are healthy, live normal life spans and are usually not aware that they have it unless they have a special blood test. However, they are at risk for having children with Sickle Cell Anemia, which is a disease. The trait will not turn into the disease or vice versa. The decision to have children is a very personal one, which only the couple can make.

If both parents have Sickle Cell Trait, for each pregnancy, there is:

- 25% chance the child will have normal hemoglobin
- 50% chance the child will have Sickle Cell Trait, a combination of one normal hemoglobin and one sickle cell gene
- 25% chance the child will have Sickle Cell Anemia, inheriting a sickle hemoglobin gene from both parents

One of 12 Blacks in the United States has Sickle Cell Trait. It is a myth that only blacks have sickle cell conditions. Sickle Cell Trait, Sickle Cell Disease and other hemoglobin variants have been found in descendants of Americans, Africans, Hispanics, Italians, Caribbeans, Greeks, and other racial and ethnic groups from the Mediterranean Sea area, India, Asia, Arabs, and Southern Europe.

Persons who have Sickle Cell Trait should be aware of the following:

1. They are advised against flying in unpressurized aircraft at an altitude above 8,000 feet
2. They are advised against going deep-sea diving or high mountain climbing, due to the possibility of sickling of the red blood cells
3. If they should see blood in his/her urine (hematuria), he/she should see a doctor immediately
4. Persons should let their anesthesiologist and doctors know their condition if they need to have any type of surgery

There are over 700 different types of hemoglobin. Many of these serve as a protection against Falciparum Malaria. They are not contagious and can only be passed from parent to child. It is important for you to know your hemoglobin type.

The Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia, Inc. offers free testing, education and counseling programs. You may visit our office Monday–Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00 p.m. to be tested. You do not need an appointment to be tested.