



What You Should Know About: Living with Sickle Cell Disease

Be Your Own Health Advocate!

Use your Medicaid benefits to help you stay healthy.

These Medicaid benefits can help you prevent problems

- **Medical visits**, so you can talk with your health care provider about how you are feeling.
- **Medication, including hydroxyurea**, which can help you stay well and avoid pain.
- **Vaccines**, to help prevent infections.
- **Medical tests**, to monitor your health and check how your organs are working.
- **Care Management services** through the Health Home program, which can help you arrange for the services and medical care you need.



If you have questions about using your benefits, call the phone number listed on your Medicaid card.

To learn more about sickle cell disease, please visit:

www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/sicklecell

Understanding Sickle Cell Disease

Did you know...?

- Sickle cell disease affects your red blood cells. It changes their shape. Instead of being round, they look more like the letter “C.”
- Sickle cell disease causes red blood cells to die early. When this happens, there are not enough cells to carry oxygen throughout the body. This condition is called anemia.
- Sickle cell disease makes red blood cells stick together and get stuck in blood vessels. This can cause pain, blood clots, and problems with organs including the heart, lungs, and kidneys. ^{1,2}
- Having sickle cell disease also makes it easier to get infections. ³
- People who have sickle cell disease are born with it. It is estimated that 100,000 Americans have this disease. ⁴
- Someone who has sickle cell disease can live a long and full life.

How to Keep Feeling Well

What can you do?



Schedule and keep regular visits with your health care provider.



Your health care provider may prescribe medicine called **hydroxyurea** to help control your disease and prevent pain crises. Follow your health care provider’s instructions for taking the medicine. Keep taking it even if you feel well.



Talk with your health care provider about keeping your vaccines up to date, especially the vaccine to help prevent pneumonia.



Wash your hands with soap and water several times a day.



Eat healthy foods.

Drink plenty of water.



Try to avoid:

- Doing things that can make you feel too hot or too cold.
- Being at high altitudes (like flying in an airplane or visiting certain cities).
- Exercising really hard.

Know When to Get Medical Help

Follow the Sickle Cell Emergency Guide instructions posted at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/sicklecell/healthyliving-emer-guide.html>

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/sicklecell/betterhealthtoolkit/caring-for-common-complications.html>
² <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/sicklecell/treatments.html>
³ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/sicklecell/treatments.html>
⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/sicklecell/data.html>