

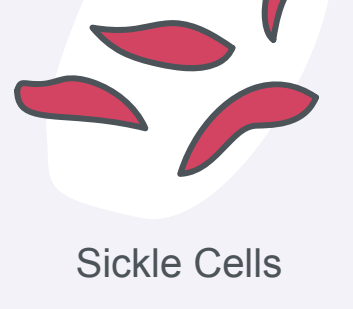
YOUR RISK FOR SERIOUS ILLNESS FROM COVID-19 WHEN YOU HAVE SICKLE CELL DISEASE

What is Sickle Cell Disease?

Sickle cell disease (SCD) is an inherited disorder of red blood cells.¹ Normal blood cells look like round discs, but in sickle cell disease, they become hard and sticky and turn into a 'C' or a 'sickle' shape.¹ These sickle cells can block blood flow, and because they die early, there is a constant shortage of red blood cells in the body.¹



Normal Red Blood Cells



Sickle Cells

There are several types of SCDs, and the type that a person has depends on the genes that they inherited from their parents.¹ The most severe form of SCD is called sickle cell anemia.¹

SCD can cause many other health complications,¹ including pain,² infection,³ acute chest syndrome³ (a life-threatening complication that may result in lung injury, breathing difficulty, and low oxygen to the rest of the body²), stroke,³ and organ damage.³

SCD affects an estimated **100,000** people in the United States—of whom approximately **90%** are Black/African American.⁴

Sickle Cell Disease and COVID-19

People with SCD face a higher risk of getting very sick* from respiratory lung infections, including COVID-19, compared to people who do not have SCD.^{3,5}

In the United States, SCD-related deaths were stable from 2014 to 2019, but increased 12% in 2020,^{3,4} which was during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is unknown exactly how many SCD-related deaths occurred because people couldn't access care right away.³

In 2020:

→ **84%** of all SCD-related deaths in the United States were associated with COVID-19.^{3,4}

→ **12%** increase in SCD-related deaths versus 2019.^{3,4}

→ **Younger people (25–59 years old)** who had SCD died in greater numbers compared to the general population—this was true for SCD-related deaths that were and were not associated with COVID-19.^{3,4}

In another 2020 study, 69% of people with SCD who contracted COVID-19 were hospitalized during their COVID-19 illness, 11% were admitted into the intensive care unit (ICU), and 7% died.⁶



WHAT YOU CAN DO

COVID-19 can be serious, but you can help prepare for it^{7,8}:

- Talk to your healthcare provider about getting vaccinated against COVID-19, including an updated booster if eligible⁹
- Understand your risk for severe COVID-19. Your risk is dependent on multiple factors, including age (50 years and older), underlying medical conditions, whether you have been vaccinated, and other risk factors. Talk to your healthcare provider about your personal risk.¹⁰
- Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19⁷
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, get tested immediately. If you were exposed to COVID-19 and do not have symptoms, wait at least 5 full days after your exposure before testing¹¹
- Talk to your healthcare professional about potential treatment options if you test positive for COVID-19 or have signs or symptoms of COVID-19¹²



If you have SCD, please remember to:

- Take extra precautions to prevent COVID-19⁶
- Continue seeking appropriate care for all your medical concerns and health complications³



ADDITIONAL REMINDERS FOR PEOPLE AT HIGH RISK FOR SEVERE ILLNESS FROM COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides some information on how to continue protecting your own and others' health⁵:

1

Take preventative measures

- Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations
- Improve ventilation (moving air into, out of, or within a room)
- Get tested if you have symptoms
- Follow recommendations for what to do if you have been exposed
- Stay home if you have suspected or confirmed COVID-19
- Seek treatment if you have COVID-19 and are at high risk of getting very sick
- Avoid contact with people who have suspected or confirmed COVID-19
- Wear a mask or respirator (for example, N95)
- Increase space and distance (avoid crowded areas, or keep distance between yourself and others)

2

Seek care when needed

- Call your healthcare provider if you have any concerns about medical conditions or about having COVID-19. **If you need emergency help, call 911 right away.**
- Do not delay getting care for any existing medical conditions

3

Continue medications and preventative care

- Continue your medications as prescribed and do not change your treatment plan without talking to your healthcare provider
- Have at least a 30-day supply of your medications (both prescription and non-prescription)
- Follow your current treatment plan to keep your medical condition(s) under control
- Keep appointments with your healthcare provider, when possible
- Learn about stress and coping. It can be helpful to talk with a healthcare provider if you are experiencing increased stress.

4

Accommodate dietary needs and avoid triggers

- Have food options readily available that last for a long time without spoiling, and meet your needs based on your medical condition(s)
- Know the triggers of your medical condition and avoid them when possible

*Getting very sick (being severely ill) with COVID-19 means that a person is more likely to be hospitalized, need intensive care, require a ventilator to help them breathe, or die.⁵

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