Thank you for choosing the Medical College of Georgia Hospitals and Clinics for your health care needs. This information is to help answer some of the questions you may have and to give you instructions to follow. If you have any other questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

**Sickle cell disease** is the name that refers to several types of blood diseases. Most often, this is called Sickle Cell Anemia. It results in anemia, an increased risk of infection and damage throughout the body.

These are the most common problems in Sickle Cell Diseases. Your doctor will give you information about you and your disease. You can get more information from the Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia, 2391 Sewell Road, SW, Atlanta, Georgia 30311. The phone number is (404) 755-1641.

**Managing Sickle Cell Disease** is aimed at keeping yourself well.

**Infections** are a major cause of sickness and death in sickle cell diseases. To prevent infections, you should:

1) Keep all appointments with your doctor. Get all the shots that your doctor tells you to get.

2) Avoid sex diseases (such as V.D., clap, AIDS, or HIV) by limiting your partners and using condoms correctly.

3) Avoid children and adults who have infections such as pneumonia, colds, diarrhea, (frequent watery bowel movements), fever and chicken pox.

4) Take all medicines your doctor tells you to take, especially antibiotics. Do not stop any medicines unless you are told to do so. Take only the medicines your doctors tell you to take.

**Pain** is common in Sickle Cell Disease. Although some causes of pain can be long-lasting, most episodes or “crises” are short and reversible. Pain should be controlled without the use of narcotics while at home. Your doctor will suggest medicines such as Tylenol or Advil that you may use. **Note that all pain is not sickle cell crisis.**

**Home Care Instructions for the Adult Patient with Sickle Cell Disease**

You may have headaches, painful cramps with your periods, or other minor aches just like people without sickle cell diseases. To control pain, you should:

1) Rest the painful part, such as the arm, knee or back.

2) Apply warm, moist heat to the painful part.

3) Drink about three quarts (12 cups) of liquids daily.
4) Avoid drinking alcohol, smoking or using “street” drugs. These drugs are very harmful and will cause crisis.

5) Avoid using pain medicines for stress, sleep, anxiety or to prevent pain.

6) Recognize and seek early treatment for infections since these can cause crisis.

**Dehydration**, or loss of fluid, causes cells to sickle. Dehydration occurs with fever, vomiting and diarrhea. It can also occur with increased activity, illness and hot places. To prevent dehydration, you should:

1) Drink 3 quarts (12 cups) of liquid every day. Drink more than this if you are playing sports or are in hot places.

2) Dress to be cool in hot weather and warm in cold weather.

3) Report all vomiting, fever and diarrhea to your doctor.

**Leg ulcers** occur in about half of all sickle cell patients. To prevent leg ulcers, you should:

1) Clean minor cuts and scratches with soap and water. Apply an antibiotic ointment, cream or spray such as Neosporin or Bactine.

2) Use insect sprays to keep mosquitoes, ticks, ants and other insects away.

3) Prop your feet up if swelling occurs. Ask your doctor about using elastic stockings or support hose.

4) Keep the skin on your legs soft by applying lotion daily.

5) Remind doctors and nurses not to draw blood or start IV’s in your leg except in emergencies.

6) See your doctor if minor cuts and scratches become infected or do not heal in one week.

**Home Care Instructions for the Adult Patient with Sickle Cell Disease**

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**Strokes** may occur in sickle cell disease, but are more common in persons less than 20 years old. If you have had a stroke in the past, regular checkups by your doctor are a must.

**Anemia** or low red blood count lasts all your life. Most people tolerate anemia pretty well. To help with the symptoms of anemia, like tiredness, irritability and poor appetite, you should:

1) Rest often. Be as active as you desire, but allow rest periods.

2) Eat a balanced diet with adequate amounts of protein (meat, cheese and dry beans), vegetables and fruits.
3) Take all the medicines that your doctor tells you to take, especially vitamins such as folic acid. Take only the medicines your doctor tells you to take.

4) Keep regular appointments with your doctor so that your blood count can be checked.

**Eye damage** may result from sickle cell disease. You should have your eyes checked by an eye doctor each year.

**Kidney damage** occurs in many people with sickle cell diseases. You should keep regular appointments with your doctor so that your kidneys can be checked.

**Priapism** is a painful erection or hardening of the penis which may last hours, days or weeks. It usually occurs in the middle of the night. Causes include lengthy sex, masturbation and infections.

Treatment varies with the kind of priapism and how bad it is. Generally, treatment is bed rest, IV fluids, medicines to help you relax your muscles and control your pain. All attacks should be reported to your doctor because severe or recurrent attacks may cause impotence.

**Childbearing**

If you do not want to have a baby you should talk to your sickle cell doctor about birth control. If you are a male or female considering having a baby, you should see your sickle cell doctor first. Females who become pregnant should see their sickle cell doctor and an OB doctor right away.

**Follow-up**

Keep the Sick Sheet posted where you can find it. You will be given or mailed an appointment slip with the date and time to return to see the doctor.

If you have any questions, call the Sickle Cell Clinic at (706) 721-3171 from 8:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M., Monday through Friday except holidays. During evenings, nights, holidays and weekends, call the paging operator at (706) 721-3893 and ask to speak to the General Medicine Resident On-call.
Sickle Cell Sick Sheet

Call to be Seen Right Away

**Fever**
- Temperature of 101° or higher

**Head**
- Bad headache, dizziness, seizures, unable to move arm(s) or leg(s), unusual sleepiness

**Chest**
- Pain with fever and cough, trouble breathing

**Stomach**
- Bad pain

**Color**
- Very pale, especially fingernails and gums
- Yellow eyes

**Penis**
- Painful erection (“hardening”)

You know what is normal for you. Call if you have questions. If you cannot reach your doctor, go to the Emergency Room.

Call for Advice

**Fever**
- Temperature of 99° or higher

**Head**
- Runny or stopped up nose
- Sinus headache (pain in cheek or between eyes)

**Arms, Legs or Back**
- Pain with no other symptoms

**Chest**
- Coughs without fever or chest pain

**Stomach**
- Vomit more than once
- Diarrhea more than once

**Kidneys**
- Burning or painful urination; cloudy, smelly urine
- Blood in urine

Sickle Cell Clinic  706-721-2171

MCGHI Paging Operator  706-721-3893

MCGHI Emergency Room  706-721-4951

NOTES: