



Sickle Cell Trait

What is Hemoglobin?

Hemoglobin is the part of the blood that carries oxygen from the lungs to all parts of the body. There are different types of hemoglobin. Your hemoglobin type comes from the genes you inherit from your parents. Genes are instructions in each of our cells that determine a person's traits such as eye color, blood type and risk of disease. Hemoglobin A is the most common type and is normal.

What is Sickle Cell Trait?

Sickle cell trait is a hereditary blood disorder. Sickle cell trait occurs when a normal gene (Hemoglobin A) is inherited from one parent and the sickle cell gene is passed down from the other parent. This means the person won't have the disease, but will be a trait "carrier" and can pass it on to his or her children. Sickle cell trait is not a disease. It will not go away or change into sickle cell disease.

Sickle cell affects people throughout the world and is particularly common among those whose ancestors came from Africa; Spanish-speaking regions in South America; the Caribbean, Central America, Saudi Arabia, India and Mediterranean countries such as Turkey, Greece and Italy.

Is Sickle Cell Trait life threatening?

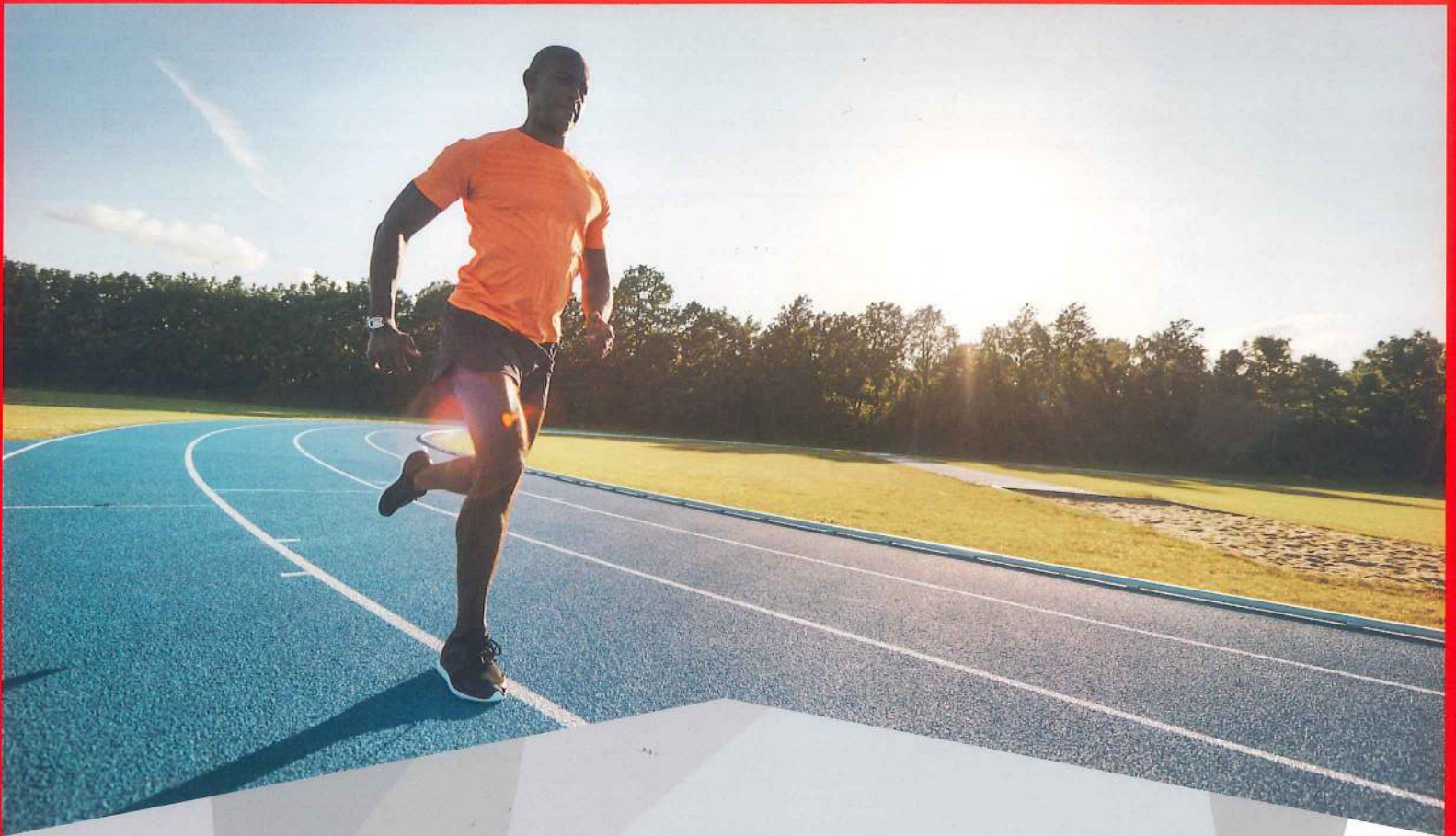
Sickle cell trait is not life threatening. Persons with sickle cell trait are not anemic, do not have physical abnormalities, usually do not have symptoms and lead a normal life span. Children and individuals with sickle cell trait do not need special health care.

Sickle cell trait is generally benign and like other trait carriers, most individuals with sickle cell trait do not have symptoms. They may have episodes of hematuria or blood in the urine. Sickling may occur under conditions of significant hypoxia (a severe shortage of oxygen), dehydration and physical exertion. This can cause a shortage of oxygen to the spleen or sudden death from exertional heat illness during strenuous exercise in older individuals.



Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia, Inc.

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Sickle Cell Trait and Athletes

Individuals with sickle cell trait can and do lead active lifestyles. During intense exercise, professional athletes with sickle cell trait have experienced significant physical distress, collapsed and even died. This brought a heightened awareness of exertion-related illnesses during or after strenuous athletic training sessions. The NCAA mandates sickle cell testing for their athletes and recommends that all athletic departments test student athletes as a prerequisite for participation. Preventive intervention includes drinking adequate amounts of fluids and taking rest breaks as needed. It is important to have staff who can recognize when students may be experiencing exertion-related complications and need medical attention.

What do I do now?

Get tested to see if you are a carrier for sickle cell trait or an abnormal hemoglobin. If you take the test, ask your provider to perform a hemoglobin electrophoresis for accurate results. This provides you with the facts to make informed decisions about your health and having children.

Visit sicklecellga.org



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