

## What will my baby's doctor do?

Your baby's doctor will work with a pediatric hematologist (a doctor who specializes in treating children with disorders of the blood) or a sickle cell center to:

- Get a complete medical history and do a physical exam; and
- Look for symptoms; and
- Get a blood sample to confirm the screening results and determine the diagnosis\*

\*Through New Jersey's Inborn Errors of Metabolism (IEM) Laboratory, families have the option of additional testing of extended family members. The fee for this service is a total of \$15.00, payable by money order, for all specimens submitted (regardless of the number). Contact the Laboratory at (609) 292-3090 for additional details and any questions.

## How is sickle cell disease treated?

Babies and children with sickle cell disease have special needs. They must have regular medical care to stay healthy. In addition to the primary care physician, it is advised that these infants and children be followed by a pediatric hematologist or at a sickle cell

center. Depending on the type of sickle cell disorder, the doctor may start penicillin by 2 to 3 months of age. This helps prevent bacterial infections that are common in these conditions.

Babies with Sickle Cell Disease can become very sick when they get an infection. Caring for a baby with sickle cell disease includes:

- avoiding infection
- getting routine immunizations (shots)
- getting regular checkups
- recognizing signs and symptoms of infection and other complications of sickle cell disease

For more information, contact:

The New Jersey Department of Health  
and Senior Services

Newborn Screening and Genetic  
Services  
at (609) 292-1582

or

The Inborn Errors of Metabolism  
Laboratory at  
(609) 292-3090

March 2005



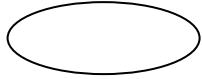
## Sickle Cell Disease

## Important Information for Parents



## What is Sickle Cell Disease?

Sickle Cell disease is a disorder of the red blood cells. Red blood cells are normally donut-shaped and move easily through the blood vessels.



Normal red blood cell

Red blood cells carry oxygen to all the cells in the body. In sickle cell disease the red blood cells become “sickle” shaped.



Sickle-shaped red blood cell

The sickle cells are not smooth and can get trapped within the blood vessels. This prevents normal blood flow and oxygen delivery. This can cause sudden pain anywhere in the body. Over time, this can damage body tissues and organs.

## What causes sickle cell disease?

Sickle cell disease is an inherited disease. It cannot be “caught” like a cold and cannot be “given” to another child.

## How is sickle cell disease found?

Shortly after birth, several drops of blood are taken from a baby’s heel. The dried blood sample is sent to the State Department of Health and Senior Services’ Inborn Errors of Metabolism Laboratory, where it is tested for sickle cell disease and several other conditions. These test are all part of the State’s Newborn Screening Program. When there is any abnormality, the baby’s doctor and parents are notified.

## What does the lab look for?

Blood is made up of proteins, and the lab is able to separate the various types of protein. The way in which the blood proteins separate shows whether sickle cell disease is present.

## Does an abnormal screening test mean that my baby has sickle cell disease?

Screening tests always need to be confirmed by additional testing and medical evaluation.

**IF YOU ARE ASKED TO HAVE YOUR BABY RE-TESTED, ACT QUICKLY AND FOLLOW YOUR DOCTOR’S ADVICE**