

September Sickle Cell Awareness Month 2026

Do you know your type?

Sickle cell is the UK's fastest-growing genetic condition, but many people still do not know what the condition is.

Sickle cell is a group of inherited red blood cell disorders where abnormal haemoglobin causes flexible, round blood cells to become rigid, sticky, and crescent or "sickle" shaped.

These misshapen cells die early, causing chronic anaemia, and can block blood flow in small vessels causing severe pain and, over time, organ damage. It is most common in people with African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, Indian, and Mediterranean family backgrounds, but can affect any ethnic group.

Many more people carry the sickle cell gene 'trait' but do not have the condition. People can ask their GP for a free NHS blood test to identify sickle cell trait or become a blood donor where they will be informed if they have the sickle trait.

Screening for sickle cell checks your blood for unusual haemoglobin genes. It helps identify sickle cell disease or carrier status early. Testing is also done during pregnancy or shortly after birth or pre-conceptually.

Screening helps to:

- (Support people to make informed choices during pregnancy and before conception
- (Improve infant health through prompt identification of affected babies
- (Improve access to high quality care and treatment

For information regarding screen, see below:

[Screening and Testing - Sickle Cell Society](#)

[Sickle cell and thalassaemia - GOV.UK](#)

[Sickle cell and thalassaemia \(English\)](#)

[Sickle cell disease - NHS](#)

[Wessex and Thames Valley Haemoglobinopathy Coordinating Centre](#) delivers specialist services to adults and children with sickle cell, thalassaemia and rare inherited anaemia within the region. For Haemoglobinopathy service-related information contact WTV.HCC@ouh.nhs.uk