Module 2: Treatment for SCD

Contents

Things to Think About for Treating Sickle Cell

Everyone who has Sickle Cell Disease has different treatment options given to them by their doctor because each patient has a unique set of characteristics. Your doctor will look at different factors like these:

- How old you are
- Your overall health and medical history
- How sick you are
- The type of sickle cell disease you have
- How well you handle certain medications, procedures, or therapies
- Your opinion and preferences

General Treatment Options

You may experience some worry knowing how complicated Sickle Cell Disease can be, but just know that there are a lot of different ways you can get help. Here are some options:

- Pain medications for sickle cell pain crises (see How to Deal with Pain Section)
- Hydroxyurea: a medication to help ease the harshness of sickle cell disease. It can help with having pain less often; it may also help you to need less blood transfusions; it may also help keep normal blood cells not to sickle.
- Blood transfusions, transferring blood from a donor through IV into the blood vessels of someone else, are used for anemia and to prevent stroke. They are also used to dilute the blood, treat chronic pain, acute chest syndrome, and other emergencies. Sometimes transfusions are used for other problems.
- Penicillin: an antibiotic used to treat or prevent infections
- Folic acid: prescribed by your doctor to help prevent severe anemia
- Stem cell transplant: can provide cures for some people (ask your doctor for more information)

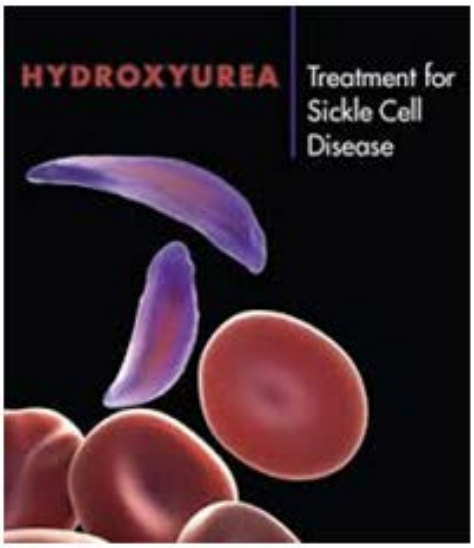
Medication: Hydroxyurea

Even though there are many medications that can help treat the SYMPTOMS of Sickle Cell Disease, right now, Hydroxyurea is the only approved drug to treat sickle cell disease itself. It is comforting to know that Hydroxyurea has helped many people living with sickle cell disease.

It is very important to remember that all patients are different and not all people with sickle cell disease should take Hydroxyurea. Even if Hydroxyurea is not a good choice for everyone, all people with Sickle Cell Disease should still know these facts about it. Here are the important points to know:

- Hydroxyurea has been shown to make pain crisis better and other problems in both children and adults with sickle cell disease
- Hydroxyurea is a safe medication when given by expert doctors and checking blood counts
- Hydroxyurea must be taken every day in order for it to work

Talk to your doctor about Hydroxyurea to see if it is right for you.



Blood Transfusions

Because Sickle Cell Disease is a disease of the blood, sometimes people with Sickle Cell Disease need blood transfusions. It's a way to put healthy blood cells right into someone's body. A blood transfusion raises the amount of hemoglobin in the blood. It also cuts the chances that a blockage, or crisis will happen.

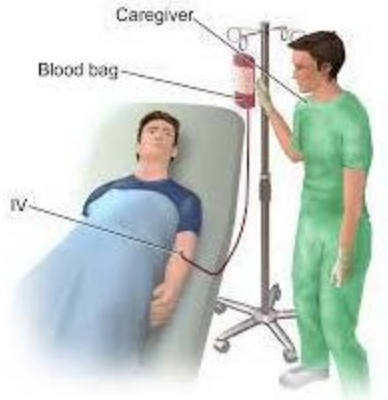
There are two types of transfusions someone may need:

- For an exchange transfusion, a person is given a set amount of blood while the same amount of blood is taken out of the body. Doing an exchange transfusion often requires two large IV lines, or a large special IV.

Each time you receive a blood transfusion, your blood will be typed and cross-matched with a donor's blood to make sure you will get a good match and to reduce the risk of complications. Complications are rare, but they do happen. This may include infections or a bad reaction to the transfused blood.

Tip: If you have had a problem or reaction to a transfusion or any other problem getting blood matched, this is an extremely important part of your medical history. Make sure you mention blood transfusion problems to any doctor who is about to order a blood transfusion for you and tell them which hospital or Blood Bank has handled your transfusion in the past.

Just like telling a doctor about medication allergies can save you from have a bad reaction to a new prescription medicine, telling the doctors about this Blood Bank history can prevent a bad transfusion reaction.



Blood Transfusion

- Simple transfusions are the most common. For a simple transfusion, a person is given a set amount of blood through an IV.

Where to Find More Information

If you want to read more about any of the topics in this module, here are the websites where the information is from:

To learn more about Hydroxyurea and dealing with pain, click here to visit the Sickle Cell Transition Education Project at Children's National Health System.

To learn more details about blood transfusions and how they work, click here to visit Kidshealth.

Great job! You’re another step closer to finishing the CHECK Sickle Cell Online Program. Hopefully you now know more about different sickle cell treatments.

Now you can move on to the next topic, which talks about ideas to help you deal with pain.