**Sickle Cell Anaemia** ([www.nhs.uk/conditions/sickle-cell-disease](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sickle-cell-disease))

**Summary:**

**Sickle cell disease is the name for a group of inherited health conditions that affect the red blood cells. The most serious type is called sickle cell anaemia.**

Sickle cell disease is particularly common in people with an African or Caribbean family background.

People with sickle cell disease produce unusually shaped red blood cells that can cause problems because they do not live as long as healthy blood cells and can block blood vessels.

Sickle cell disease is a serious and lifelong health condition, although treatment can help manage many of the symptoms.

**Symptoms:**

People born with sickle cell disease tend to have problems from early childhood, although some children have few symptoms and lead normal lives most of the time.

The main symptoms of sickle cell disease are:

* painful episodes called sickle cell crises, which can be very severe and last up to a week
* an increased risk of serious infections
* anaemia (where red blood cells cannot carry enough oxygen around the body), which can cause tiredness and shortness of breath

**Strategies:**

* drinking plenty of fluids and staying warm to prevent painful episodes
* painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen (sometimes treatment with stronger painkillers in hospital may be necessary)