



Sickle Cell Disease Pain Management Toolkit for Emergency Providers

Approximately 80 infants are born each year in Louisiana with sickle cell disease (SCD), and there are about 3,000 people in the Louisiana Medicaid program living with the disease. Pain is the most common complication of sickle cell disease and the top reason people with SCD go to the emergency department. Many people with SCD report challenges and barriers when seeking treatment in emergency department settings.

There are several steps that emergency providers can take to improve care for people with sickle cell disease when they are in the emergency department. This toolkit provides information about sickle cell disease and recommendations for emergency department providers.

KEY MESSAGES

- Sickle cell disease is an inherited disease that involves red blood cells and causes them to become hard and sticky and look C-shaped instead of round (like a sickle.) In small blood vessels, the sickle-shaped cells get stuck and cause blood flow blockages. This can cause pain and other serious complications. Patients affected by the disease have a reduced number of red blood cells, which results in anemia and fatigue.
- People with SCD visit the emergency department to seek care and manage debilitating symptoms related to their disease. Many people with SCD have reported challenges such as long wait times and a lack of provider knowledge related to SCD when seeking treatment in emergency department settings.
- A pain crisis (vaso-occlusive episode or VOE) can start suddenly, be mild to severe, and last for any length of time. Pain can occur in any part of the body, but commonly occurs in the hands, feet, chest, and back. Patients may not appear to be in pain because they have often developed a high pain tolerance due to a lifetime of chronic pain.
- Other symptoms include fatigue, temperature sensitivity, dehydration, the need to frequently use the restroom, and more serious complications, such as stroke.
- Emergency department providers can play an active role in ensuring patients with sickle cell disease receive the care they need in a timely and respectful manner.

TOOLKIT ASSETS

Informational One-Pager

This document can help emergency providers understand sickle cell disease, the barriers sickle cell disease patients often face in emergency department settings, and provide recommendations for improving pain management.

- [Click here to download the one-pager](#)

Posters

Recommended use:

Post in areas frequented by emergency department providers, such as offices, emergency department waiting areas, staff meeting rooms, and staff break areas.

The posters can be used as a brief primer on sickle cell disease, informing providers about sickle cell disease and recommendations for improving pain management.

- [Click here to download the 8.5x11 poster](#)
- [Click here to download the 11x17 poster](#)

Clinical Example

This document provides an example of Pediatric Clinical Pathways for Sickle Cell Disease Pain and Fever from Children's Hospital New Orleans. **Please note, the guidelines are provided as an example of how emergency departments can create their own treatment plans. The guidelines are not intended to prevent appropriate variation in practice that is necessary to meet the unique needs of individual patients and family circumstances.**

- [Click here to download the Pediatric Clinical Pathways example](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- An in-depth guide to managing sickle cell disease in emergency department settings from the American College of Emergency Physicians [here](#).
- Information from the CDC on the complications of sickle cell disease [here](#).
- Webinar from the CDC on breaking down barriers to emergency department care for people with sickle cell disease [here](#).
- The CDC has compiled stories from people directly affected by Sickle Cell Disease, highlighting the impact that identification, treatment, and resources can have on real people. Read their stories [here](#).
- [Addressing Sickle Cell Disease: A Strategic Plan and Blueprint](#) from the National Academies, which examines the epidemiology, health outcomes, genetic implications, and societal factors associated with SCD and Sickle Cell Trait (SCT).
- [Sickle Cell Clinics and Foundations in Louisiana](#)
- [Sickle Cell Disease Association of America](#)

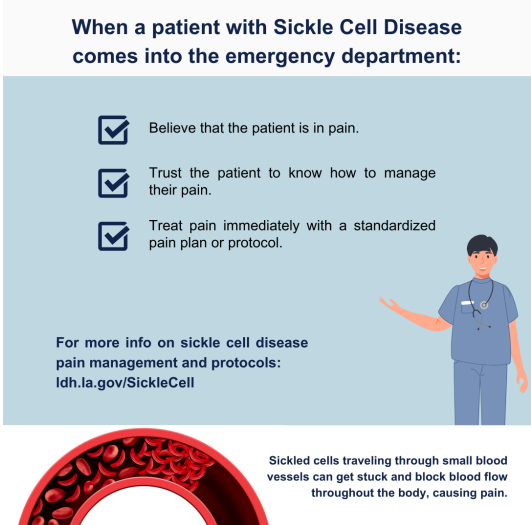

CONTACT

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Suggested Social Media Content

To use these social media graphics, click on each image to open the link. Then download the file to your computer and upload it to your social media platform of choice. These images and captions are designed to be posted on Facebook and Twitter.

| Graphic | Caption |
|---|---|
|  <p>When a patient with Sickle Cell Disease comes into the emergency department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Believe that the patient is in pain.✓ Trust the patient to know how to manage their pain.✓ Treat pain immediately with a standardized pain plan or protocol. <p>For more info on sickle cell disease pain management and protocols: ldh.la.gov/SickleCell</p> <p>Sickled cells traveling through small blood vessels can get stuck and block blood flow throughout the body, causing pain.</p> | <p>People with sickle cell disease (SCD) visit the emergency department (ED) to seek care and manage debilitating symptoms related to their disease. Learn more about simple steps ED providers can take to improve pain management for people with SCD: ldh.la.gov/page/sickle-cell</p> |
|  <p>Are you an emergency care provider?</p> <p>Check out our toolkit for managing Sickle Cell Disease pain and fever: ldh.la.gov/SickleCell</p> <p>Did you know sickled cells traveling through small blood vessels can get stuck and block blood flow throughout the body, causing pain?</p> | <p>Emergency department providers can play an active role in ensuring patients with sickle cell disease receive the care they need in a timely and respectful manner. Learn more here: ldh.la.gov/page/sickle-cell</p> |