

Risk Factors for Sickle Cell Disease

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[En Español \(Spanish Version\)](#)

A risk factor is something that increases your likelihood of getting a disease or condition.

The only way to get sickle cell disease is to inherit two defective genes that cause sickle cell diseases. However, the following factors make a baby more likely to be born with sickle cell disease:

Genetic Factors

Children who receive two abnormal genes (one from each of their parents) will have sickle cell disease. Children who receive one abnormal gene and one normal gene usually have no symptoms and are said to have “sickle cell trait.” They can, however, pass their abnormal gene on to their own children, which, if combined with a sickle cell gene from the other parent, will cause a child to have sickle cell disease.

Ethnic Background

The vast majority of people with sickle cell disease are of sub-Saharan African descent. In the United States, this accounts for about 90% of all sickle cell disease patients. Other people at risk for sickle cell disease are those whose ancestors came from South America, Cuba, Central America, Saudi Arabia, India, Turkey, Greece, and Italy.

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[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

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