



SICKLE CELL CLINIC

Blood Counts

What are my blood counts?

In sickle cell disease, it is important to obtain a complete blood count (CBC) at each clinic visit. A blood count helps your medical team know how many cells your body is making. This helps your doctor know how to treat a patient.

What is important to know on a CBC?

Red blood cells: Your red blood cells carry oxygen to your body.

Hemoglobin: The part of your red blood cell that carries oxygen.

- If your hemoglobin is lower than 11 g/dL, you have anemia.
- Most patients with sickle cell have anemia.
- It is important to know what your normal hemoglobin level is. During sickle cell crisis, sometimes your hemoglobin will go lower than normal. By comparing your normal hemoglobin number versus a low hemoglobin during sickle cell crisis, your doctor can learn how to treat you.
- Some patients with a very low hemoglobin level on most days are at higher risk for complications, including stroke or kidney damage.

Reticulocyte count: The reticulocyte count tells you how many new red blood cells are being made each day.

- Your body can tell if you have anemia.
- Your body works to make more red blood cells when you have anemia.
- A very high reticulocyte count means that your body is working hard each day to make new red blood cells.

White blood cells: Your white blood cells fight off infection.

- White blood cell count usually goes up to help fight infection when someone is sick, especially with bacterial infections.
- Many sickle cell patients have a higher white blood cell count every day. A high white blood cell count every day may not be good for your body.
- White blood cell count might go down if you have a viral infection.
- When a white blood cell count is low every day, it may be easier to get an infection.

Neutrophil: A neutrophil is a type of white blood cell that prevents or kills bacteria.

- Many sickle cell patients have higher neutrophil count every day.
- If you are taking hydroxyurea, the goal is to get your neutrophil count back to a normal range.
- It is important to have your blood counts checked if you are taking hydroxyurea so that we can make sure it does not get too low

Platelets: Platelets help you stop bleeding.

- If your platelet count is low you may have an increase in bleeding, bruising, or nosebleeds.
- Many sickle cell patients have higher platelet counts every day.
- Hydroxyurea may bring your platelet count back to normal.
- It is important to have your blood counts checked if you are taking hydroxyurea so that we can make sure it does not get too low.