



SICKLE CELL CLINIC

Hydroxyurea

What is Hydroxyurea?

- Hydroxyurea is a medicine for babies, children, teenagers, and adults to improve sickle cell disease.
- Hydroxyurea has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for children and adults with sickle cell disease.

How do I take Hydroxyurea?

- Hydroxyurea can be prescribed in oral form as a liquid or a pill.
- It is a medication that you can take every day for the rest of your life.

How can Hydroxyurea improve my care?

Hydroxyurea has been studied in many patients with sickle cell disease. The research shows that Hydroxyurea can:

- 1) Lower the number of pain crises you experience.
- 2) Lower the number of trips to the hospital.
- 3) Lower the number of times you develop acute chest syndrome (pneumonia).
- 4) Lower the number of transfusions you will need.
- 5) Improve your quality of life.

In some circumstances, Hydroxyurea can reduce your risk for stroke or kidney disease. In long term studies, patients that take Hydroxyurea live longer.

Is Hydroxyurea a cure for sickle cell disease?

Every research study of Hydroxyurea proves that this medication improves your health. It does not cure you of sickle cell disease or prevent you from having any complications from sickle cell disease.

Once I start Hydroxyurea how long will it take to work?

- The effect of the medication may vary from person to person.
- It is best to take Hydroxyurea for at least a year before deciding it has no effect
- During the first few months, your Sickle Cell provider will check your blood counts to monitor for effect.
- If you take Hydroxyurea every day, it will take several months before we see the full benefit of Hydroxyurea.
- Once your blood counts show that your Hydroxyurea is working well, you will have blood work checked less frequently.

Is Hydroxyurea safe?

- We believe that being on Hydroxyurea is safe and important for your health
- Like all medications, it has side effects that you should be discussed with your sickle cell provider.
- At full dose, Hydroxyurea can lower your blood counts. This is why it is important to check your labs frequently when beginning the medication.
- If the Hydroxyurea lowers your blood counts, we can hold your medication as the blood counts improve.
- Mild stomach pain has been reported as a possible side effect.
- Hydroxyurea was first used as a treatment for cancer. In sickle cell disease, we treat patients at a much lower dose. It should not cause hair loss, nausea, or vomiting.
- We have closely monitored patients on Hydroxyurea and have found no link between Hydroxyurea and developing cancer.