



Our Blood Saves Lives. **SICKLE CELL FIGHTERS**

Who is impacted by sickle cell disease?

Approximately 100,000 people in the U.S. are living with sickle cell disease. Most people with sickle cell disease are African American or of African descent. In fact, the disease affects 1 out of every 365 African American babies born in this country.

What is sickle cell disease?

Sickle cell disease causes red blood cells to be hard and crescent-shaped (like a sickle) instead of soft and round. As a result, it is difficult for blood to flow smoothly and carry enough oxygen to the rest of the body, which may result in severe pain, organ and tissue damage, or even strokes.

How is sickle cell disease treated?

Blood transfusions help provide a lifesaving treatment during a sickle cell pain crisis by replacing sickled red blood cells with healthy red blood cells. This helps deliver oxygen to tissues and organs and unblock blood vessels. Donated blood is the only source of this treatment.

How can I help?

Blood donors who are Black have the unique ability to help patients with sickle cell disease. A person with sickle cell disease may need a precise pairing with a blood donor, especially if frequent transfusions are necessary. If a patient receives a transfusion of a blood type that is not a close match, they may form antibodies against the mismatched antigens. To help avoid transfusion-related complications, a patient is more likely to find the most compatible blood match from a donor of the same race or similar ethnicity.

Schedule a blood donation appointment and learn more at:

[RedCrossBlood.org/OurBlood](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org/OurBlood)



**American
Red Cross**

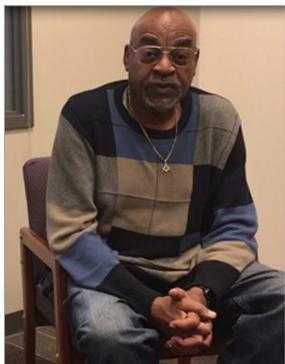
Blood donations can save lives.

Here are a few people whose lives have been touched by generous blood donors:



At 27, Justina is living her dream. She supports people with sickle cell disease and helps them work through health-related challenges. Diagnosed with sickle cell disease at birth, Justina needed her first emergency blood transfusion at three. “Doctors said they could have lost me had I not gotten to the hospital and got that transfusion.”

That was the first of many blood transfusions to help relieve Justina of the pain she endures during a crisis. To manage her sickle cell disease today, Justina receives monthly blood transfusions. She estimates she's received blood more than 100 times.



Melvin began donating blood at age 18 for a simple reason: “the boss would let you leave work early!” he said, laughing. In the past 54 years, Melvin has donated 95 pints of blood, and for several years he's been matched with a patient with sickle cell disease. He came to donate every time that person needed a transfusion.

Melvin stopped giving a few times in his life, following cancer diagnoses. Both times, he went back to giving blood after completing treatment. In 2020, he was diagnosed with bone cancer. Melvin receives blood transfusions himself as part of his treatment. “This experience impressed on me the importance of giving blood because it is the one thing each of us can do for others. It helps so many people,” said Melvin. “Believe me, donating blood saves lives.”



Nicole was diagnosed with sickle cell disease at birth. She experienced her first pain crisis at six months old. Nicole depends on blood transfusions every three to four months and has received over 60 transfusions.

“Blood saves my life,” said Nicole. “when I receive a blood transfusion, I can immediately feel the warmth and replenishment of blood to my organs. Blood donors allow me to continue to live my best life and I will never take them for granted.”

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