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Sickle Cell Disease: Vision Problems

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Topic Overview

People who have sickle cell disease can sometimes have vision problems. Blood cells that change shape, or "sickle," can get trapped in blood vessels, blocking the blood flow. When this blockage occurs in the small blood vessels in the inner lining (retina) of the eyes, it can cause vision problems. This most often occurs in people who have hemoglobin SC disease, a type of sickle cell disease.

In the worst cases, the retina may come loose, leading to permanent blindness. This may happen suddenly, without any warning.

Early detection can help prevent these problems. Have your child's eyes checked during the newborn period and again at all routine well-child visits. ¹And get routine eye exams as an adult. Try to go to a doctor who specializes in eye problems (ophthalmologist).

Credits

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