



Spleen Sickle Cell

1600 7th Ave S • Birmingham, AL 35233 • 205.638.9285 • Hematology/Oncology Clinic 8

Why is the spleen important in sickle cell?

- The spleen is an organ. It is located just under the left bottom rib cage.
- The spleen is a filter for your blood. It takes out broken down blood cells and helps fight infections.

Why does the spleen matter in sickle cell disease?

- When sickle cells break down, they go to the spleen.
- Sometimes the sickle cells get stuck in the spleen. When this happens, they can cause other cells to get stuck as well. This is called splenic sequestration.

What is splenic sequestration?

- Sometimes the red cells get stuck in the spleen and does not allow blood out. This causes more red cells to enter the spleen but they become trapped and cannot get out. This causes the spleen to fill with lots of red blood cells and become bigger.
- If the spleen is keeping all of the red blood cells, the rest of the body has less red blood cells.
- This can be a life threatening emergency.

How will I know if my child has splenic sequestration?

- If your child suddenly has less red blood cells in his body and more in his spleen, your child will have pain or swelling in the left upper belly. Your child will be very tired and look pale.
- Your nurse practitioner or doctor can teach you how to feel your child's spleen.

How is a splenic sequestration treated?

- You should take your child to a doctor to check the blood count and feel the spleen.
- If your child has splenic sequestration, your child will need a blood transfusion.

How can we prevent splenic sequestration?

- We do not know how to prevent this from happening.
- If a child has had severe or frequent times of splenic sequestration, we may need to do a surgery to take out the spleen or place your child on monthly transfusions.