

Hydroxyurea Use for Sickle Cell Disease

Hydroxyurea is an oral medicine that can help reduce sickle cell disease (SCD) complications.

People who take hydroxyurea must use it regularly as prescribed and receive consistent medical care. Ask your healthcare provider about the potential benefits and risks, and whether hydroxyurea is right for you.

Facts About Hydroxyurea

It has been a standard treatment for SCD for more than 30 years.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved hydroxyurea for severe SCD in 1998 for adults and in 2017 for children.

It can reduce the likelihood of a pain crisis.

Hydroxyurea has been shown to reduce, by about half, the number of painful events a person with SCD may experience.

It has been shown to improve anemia and reduce the need for blood transfusions and hospital admissions.

One way to help reduce fatigue from anemia in people living with SCD is by increasing hemoglobin levels. This provides more oxygen to the body, giving the person with SCD increased energy. Studies have shown hydroxyurea is one of several drugs that does this.



Most experts recommend daily use of hydroxyurea for children and adults with sickle cell disease.

It can reduce the number of episodes of acute chest syndrome, a medical emergency.

By increasing hemoglobin, hydroxyurea can potentially prevent the blockage of blood flow to the lungs.



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sicklecell.nhlbi.nih.gov

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It may reduce the risk of stroke in children with SCD.

SCD reduces blood flow to the brain, which can cause a stroke, particularly in children.

It is not appropriate for anyone who is pregnant.

If you are thinking of becoming pregnant, talk to your doctor about when to stop taking hydroxyurea.

Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Provider

- How does hydroxyurea treat SCD?
- What are the possible short- and long-term side effects for me?
- How long would I need to take it?
- How many pills would I need to take every day?
- How often would I need to see my doctor when taking hydroxyurea?
- Are there other treatments I should consider?



SCD treatments, including hydroxyurea, may reduce symptoms and improve quality of life. Work with your healthcare provider to find what works best for you.

Learn more about available SCD treatments at sicklecell.nhlbi.nih.gov



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