

FAQ Sickle Cell Trait Testing

What is Sickle Cell Trait?

Sickle Cell Trait (SCT) is the inheritance of an abnormal gene which can cause deformation (“sickling”) of the red blood cells. Approximately one in every 12 African-Americans has sickle cell trait (compared to approximately 2,000-12,000 White Americans). The gene for sickle cell trait is also present in individuals of Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, Indian, Caribbean and South/Central American ancestry. All newborns in the US are required to be screened for sickle cell.

SCT has been associated with exertional rhabdomyolysis, renal failure, as well as complicating factors include extreme exertion, increased heat, altitude and dehydration. Over a seven year span, nine athletes participating in NCAA sports died as a complication of sickle cell trait. It is because of this that the NCAA now mandates testing or proof of testing prior to any practice, competition, or conditioning.

Can I participate without a sickle cell test?

As of the 2010-2011 academic years all athletes participating in NCAA Division I sports must have sickle cell testing performed or show proof of sickle cell testing. This proof must be documented before participating in any practice, competition, or conditioning/weight session.

I am just trying out. Do I need a sickle cell test?

All athletes are required to have a sickle cell test performed. Even if you are trying out for the team, you will need to get a test before participating in your tryout.

Why get tested?

This test (a blood test) is relatively easy to perform and can provide educational information that can be helpful to you on and off the field. It is helpful to know your sickle cell status and can allow health care professionals to take better care of you. If you were born in the US, your testing results may be available in your medical record.

What happens if I test positive?

Athletes that are SCT positive are able to participate in sports, often with no modifications whatsoever. Individuals that test positive for sickle cell will be counseled on what can be done to prevent complications.

Who will know that I test positive?

Test results will be kept confidential in accordance with the law and VT policy, although the VT medical staff will need to be aware of your sickle cell status in order to provide optimal care.

How do I get tested?

If you were born in the US, your testing results may be available in your medical record. If these results are not available speak with your athletic trainer. We will have testing during physicals but there will be

a three day window before results are presented to the athletic trainer. Your athletic trainer can provide you information regarding testing sites to speed up the process.

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions regarding the NCAA requirements please go to the following website:

<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/Health+and+Safety/Sickle+Cell/Sickle+Cell+Landi+ng+Page>