



# Hemoglobin C Fact Sheet

## What is Hemoglobin C?

Hemoglobin C means a person's body makes something different that shows up in the part of blood called hemoglobin ("he-mo-glow-bin"). **It is not a sickness or a health problem.** It is not a sickle cell disease. Your child may have low blood counts (or mild anemia) because hemoglobin C is different from normal hemoglobin and the red blood cells are broken down more quickly.

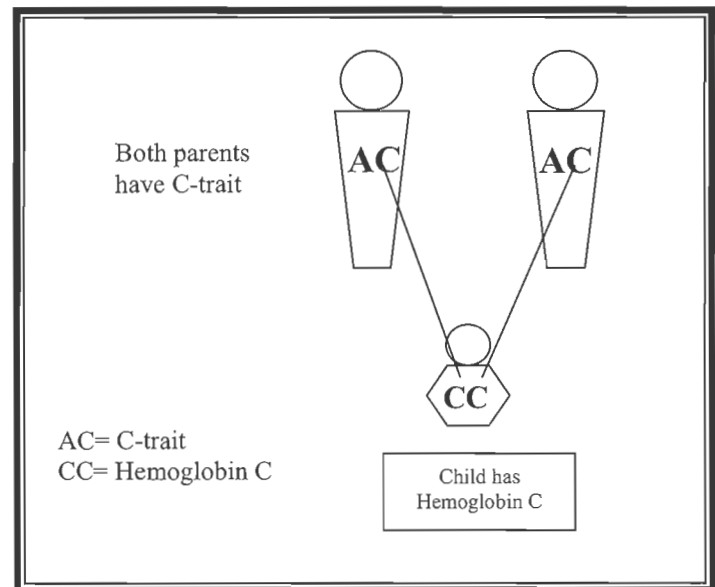
## What is Hemoglobin?

Hemoglobin is what makes your blood red. It delivers oxygen to all body parts. There are many different kinds of hemoglobin. The most common is called hemoglobin A (normal). Your child's body makes a different kind called hemoglobin C. Your child was born with this difference and it will not change as he/she gets older.

## How Does a Person Get Hemoglobin C?

Hemoglobin C is inherited. The type of hemoglobin a person makes depends on the kind that runs in their family. This means it is passed down from parent to child through the genes.

Most likely, your child inherited a hemoglobin "C" gene from each parent. This means that both parents have the hemoglobin C-trait. People with C-trait make both hemoglobin A (normal) and hemoglobin C (different). Trait is another word for carrier. It means a person carries a gene for something different.



## What are Genes?

Genes are instructions for making all of our body parts and features. They are the blueprint for making a human. Genes come in pairs. Half of our genes come from our mother through the egg and half from our father through the sperm.

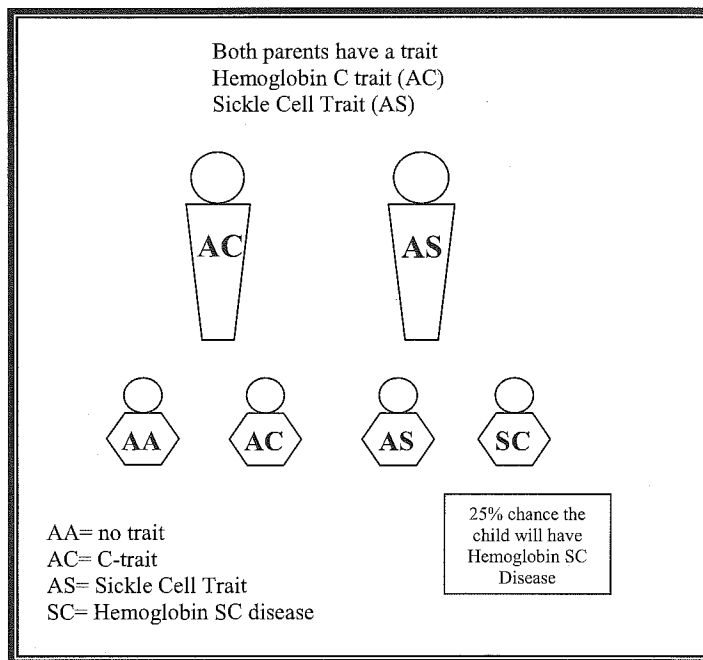
For hemoglobin, your child most likely has two "C" genes which tells his/her body to make only hemoglobin C. As his/her parent, you most likely have AC genes (hemoglobin C-trait).

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## Why is it Important to Test Parents?

Most people who have a trait don't know it because it does not make them sick. If a parent who has the C-trait (AC genes) has children with someone who has sickle cell trait (AS genes), a future child could get a disease gene from each parent. When **both** parents have a trait (AS and AC), every baby has a 25% chance of having **Hemoglobin SC Disease**. If testing shows one parent has a trait and the other does not, there is no chance of having a child with a hemoglobin disease.

Hemoglobin SC Disease is a type of sickle cell disease where the cells change shape and cause blockages in the blood vessels. This blockage is painful and limits the amount of oxygen to body parts. This can lead to serious and sometimes life threatening health problems.



## How do I know if I have a trait?

A special blood test can be done to find out if both parents have any type of trait. This blood test is called electrophoresis ("ee-lek-tro-for-ee-sis") and is the only way to know for sure. You will not know if you have a trait unless you ask to have this test done. Other tests (e.g. Sickledex) may not detect some traits. Do not assume this testing has been done before.

You may want to speak with a genetic counselor or your doctor about your test results or the risks to your children and your choices. Genetic counselors can also tell you about tests during a pregnancy, which can find out if the baby has a sickle cell disease.