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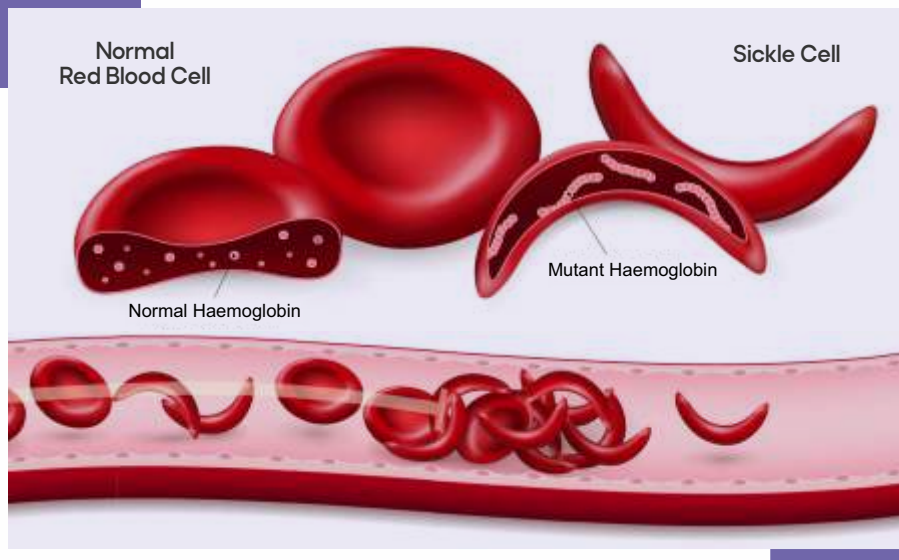
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Understanding **Sickle Cell Anaemia**



What is Sickle Cell Anaemia

Sickle Cell Anaemia is a genetic disorder that affects the red blood cells. It is characterised by an abnormal haemoglobin called Haemoglobin S (HbS), which causes red blood cells to take on a crescent or sickle shape. These abnormally shaped cells can lead to various complications as they can block the blood flow, causing pain and organ damage.

Causes

Sickle Cell Anaemia is an inherited condition caused by a mutation in the gene responsible for producing haemoglobin. To develop Sickle Cell Anaemia, a person must inherit a copy of the defective gene from both the parents. Individuals with only one copy of the gene are carriers and usually do not exhibit symptoms.

Symptoms

Symptoms of Sickle Cell Anaemia can vary from person to person and may include:

- **Pain Crisis:** Intense pain due to blocked blood flow
- **Fatigue:** Lack of oxygen-carrying capacity leading to fatigue
- **Jaundice:** Yellowing of the skin and eyes
- **Swelling of Hands and Feet:** Due to blocked blood flow
- **Frequent Infections:** Weakened immune system
- **Delayed Growth:** Children with sickle cell disease usually grow and develop more slowly, even reaching puberty later than their peers. This growth delay is caused by lack of red blood cells

Diagnosis

Diagnosing Sickle Cell Anaemia involves a combination of medical history, physical examination, and laboratory tests. Common tests include, Complete Blood Count (CBC), Haemoglobin Electrophoresis and Genetic Testing.

Treatment

While there is no cure for Sickle Cell Anaemia, various treatments can help manage symptoms and complications:

- **Pain Management:** Medications to relieve pain during crisis
- **Hydroxyurea:** A medication that may reduce the frequency of pain episodes
- **Blood Transfusions:** To increase the number of normal red blood cells
- **Bone Marrow or Stem Cell Transplant:** In severe cases, a transplant may be considered

Lifestyle Management

Patients with Sickle Cell Anaemia can take steps to manage the condition and improve their quality of life:

- **Hydration:** Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration
- **Healthy Diet:** Eat a balanced diet rich in vitamins and nutrients
- **Regular Medical Check-ups:** Monitor for complications and manage them promptly
- **Avoiding Triggers:** Identify and avoid factors that may trigger a crisis, such as extreme temperatures or stress

Sickle Cell Anaemia is a lifelong condition that requires proactive management. With proper medical care, lifestyle adjustments, and support, individuals with Sickle Cell Anaemia can lead normal lives.

