

When Baby Needs A Second Test for a Hemoglobinopathy

A small sample of your baby's blood was collected soon after birth and sent to the DHEC laboratory for testing. This testing is called Newborn Screening. In SC, newborns are tested for several genetic and chemical disorders. Some times, a second test is needed to help your doctor decide if your baby has one of these disorders. In many cases, the second test will be normal. However, if your baby does have one of the newborn screening disorders, early treatment will give him or her the best chance to grow up healthy.

Because unusually formed blood cells were found in your baby's first test, he or she could possibly have a hemoglobinopathy disorder.

What are hemoglobinopathy disorders?

Hemoglobinopathy disorders are genetic disorders that affect the way that red blood cells are made. They are found in people of all background and races. The most common type of hemoglobinopathy disorder found in SC is Sickle Cell Disease. Sickle Cell Disease is usually found in African-Americans. Around one of every 400 African-American babies is born with Sickle Cell Disease each year.

Sickle Cell Disease can cause many problems including misshaped red blood cells, anemia, severe pain and high risk for infection.

How will I know if my baby really has a hemoglobinopathy disorder?

If your baby's newborn screening result showed unusually formed blood cells, he or she probably has a hemoglobinopathy disorder. The newborn screening test will be repeated and additional tests will be done to help the doctors figure out if your baby has a hemoglobinopathy disorder. Usually the results of these tests take a few days to come back. You will also be referred to a doctor who specializes in these kinds of disorders.

What do I need to do until I know the final results?

Your baby will probably not have any symptoms at first, but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions very carefully. If your baby seems to be getting sick, call your doctor right away.

How are hemoglobinopathy disorders treated?

Babies with Sickle Cell Disease should take an antibiotic like penicillin each day to help cut down on infections. There are other medicines and treatments that are sometimes used to help control Sickle Cell Disease.

Other hemoglobinopathy disorders are usually not as severe as Sickle Cell Disease. Some do not even need treatment.

What else should I do to keep my baby as healthy as possible?

Don't forget to keep all of your well baby check-ups! Seeing the doctors regularly and following their instructions carefully are the best things you can do to help your baby grow and develop.