



SICKLE CELL POLICY

Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood condition that can be found in a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. If a person receives a sickle cell gene from *both* parents, they will inherit sickle cell disease. If he/she inherits only *one* sickle cell gene, then they are said to have “sickle cell trait”.

Persons with the sickle cell trait do not have sickle cell disease and typically have no problems *with the exception that they can be at a higher risk when exercising very hard in hot conditions for heat illness problems and even death.* For this reason, WFU Sports Medicine would like to know if you have sickle cell trait or sickle cell disease so that we can take measures to prevent these problems. (If you have the trait, it will not affect your ability to play your sport or your standing on the team.)

All newborn babies are tested for sickle cell disease and the trait when they are born. If you present proof of your status for sickle cell trait (usually on record with whoever was your doctor when you were born) then the test does not need to be repeated here. If you cannot provide documentation then the simple blood test will be performed at the time of your sports physical when you arrive on campus.

For athletes who carry the sickle cell trait the following simple steps will be taken:

1. The athlete will watch the NCAA educational video about sickle cell trait and athletic participation.
2. The athlete will meet with a team physician to answer any questions and make sure the athlete understands the issue and the steps he or she needs to take to make remain safe while participating (staying hydrated, recognize early symptoms of heat illness/sickle crisis, and report them to sports medicine staff and coaches immediately).
3. Sport and strength/conditioning coaches notified of athlete’s trait status to ensure that athlete is allowed access to fluids as needed, is not forced to participate in timed physical tests before becoming acclimated to heat and exertion at the beginning of a season, and any athlete complaints of exhaustion are taken seriously and activity stopped until evaluation by sports medicine staff is completed.
4. Sports medicine staff present at official practices and workouts will monitor the athlete’s status closely and encourage adequate hydration. The sports medicine staff will also monitor environmental conditions and possibly limit or halt exercise if risk is determined to be high.