



# spotlight on health

## Free Iron Screening For People Living With Sickle Cell Disease

(NAPSA)—Did you know that if you have had multiple blood transfusions to treat your sickle cell disease, you are at risk for a serious condition?

More than 70,000 people in the U.S. suffer from sickle cell disease (SCD), with one in 12 African Americans carrying the trait for this genetic blood disorder. The condition causes red blood cells to become deformed, or sickle shaped. These deformed blood cells can clump together and block blood vessels, leading to severe pain and organ damage.

### **A Routine Treatment May Also Be Harmful**

Blood transfusions are an important part of treatment for many patients with SCD. But this blood contains iron that the body cannot remove on its own. If excess iron continues to build up in your organs, it may lead to serious conditions, including heart and liver disease, diabetes, infertility or growth problems.

“Many patients are not aware of the risk of transfusional iron overload,” says Sickle Cell Disease Chief Medical Officer Lanetta B. Jordan, M.D., MPH, MSPH. “That’s why it’s very important for patients with sickle cell disease who are receiving blood transfusions to talk with their doctor about monitoring their iron levels.”

### **What You Can Do**

Dr. Jordan urges people living

with sickle cell disease to remember the following:

- Know how many transfusions you have received. If you have had more than 10 blood transfusions, speak to your doctor about getting a serum ferritin screening, a simple blood test that measures the amount of iron in your body, to see if you may be at risk for iron overload.

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**A voucher for a free serum ferritin screening to test for iron overload is available through [www.freeirontest.com](http://www.freeirontest.com).**



- A serum ferritin number of 1,000 mcg/L may mean you have iron overload, which may lead to serious health consequences. So talk to your doctor about getting tested.

- If you’re diagnosed with iron overload, remember that it’s important for your doctor to monitor your iron levels regularly.

### **A New Program Can Help**

Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation is sponsoring a free serum ferritin screening program. Patients can go to [www.freeirontest.com](http://www.freeirontest.com) to register to receive a free screening voucher.

### **Learning More**

For more information on SCD and transfusional iron overload and how you can get a free serum ferritin screening, visit [www.freeirontest.com](http://www.freeirontest.com).