

## Female Issues in SCD

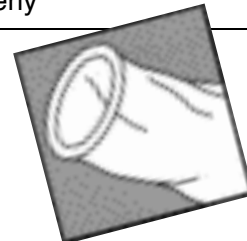
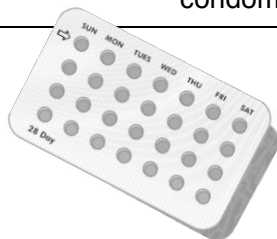
Things to consider.

- You may notice that you start seeing periods later than other friends or family without sickle cell disease - this is normal for persons with sickle cell disease. You can usually expect to see your periods about two years after you start developing breasts. If you are not having periods by the time you are 16 years old then see your doctor.
- If you are having sex but do not want to get pregnant then you have **MANY** options for family planning!! – see below.
- If you are planning to get pregnant - ask your partner to get tested for sickle cell disease so that you know the chances of passing the disease on to your child.
- If you become pregnant, you should see a doctor as soon as you miss a period! Your sickle cell disease may become worse while you are pregnant - so your pregnancy should be watched **VERY CLOSELY** by a team of doctors who know about sickle cell disease.

### **YOU CAN USE ANY TYPE OF FAMILY PLANNING METHOD THAT OTHER PATIENTS CAN USE!!**

What are my family planning options?

- An injection every 12 weeks (3 months) called depo provera
- Any type of family planning pills (called “the Pill”): these you take one (1) pill every day for 21 days, then take a break for 7 days when you will have a period and then repeat this again with a new pack of pills
- Family planning patches: you wear one (1) patch on your arm or another part of your body and change it every week for three (3) weeks, then take a break for a week when you will have a period and then repeat this again with a new pack of patches
- A very small coil can be put into your womb by a specialist doctor to prevent you from getting pregnant, your specialist will tell you when to change it
- You or your partner can use condoms: female or male condoms work well when used properly



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- You may have problems with high blood pressure while you are pregnant.
- You may have worse or more frequent pain.
- You may have more serious infections.
- Your blood count may fall very low - you may need to get blood (this is called a blood transfusion).
- You may get chest infections (like pneumonia) more easily while you are pregnant.

What if I become pregnant?

### WHEN YOU BECOME PREGNANT...

- Register early at a high-risk antenatal clinic or with a high-risk specialist obstetrician.
- Take folic acid and iron supplements right through your pregnancy.
- You will be told to see your specialist doctors more often than other patients who do not have sickle cell disease.
- You may need to spend more time in hospital when you have your baby if you have any problems at the birth or shortly after that.

### Remember:.....

- If you are using hydroxyurea (HU) to help with your sickle cell disease then you will need to stop using it six (6) months before you get pregnant.
- Try to plan every pregnancy to protect your health and the health of your baby.
- Because you have sickle cell disease, you **will** pass a haemoglobin gene that can cause sickle cell disease to your baby. Before you get pregnant, it is best to check if your partner has AA type blood. That way your baby will not get sickle cell disease.
- If your partner has the sickle cell trait. There is a 50% chance your baby will have sickle cell disease

