



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
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Chief Medical Officer
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Center for Health Equity &
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September 30, 2024

Toni Eyssallenne, MD, PhD
Deputy Chief Medical Officer
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Gotham Center
42-09 28th Street
Long Island City, NY 11101

Dear Colleague,

In honor of [National Sickle Cell Anemia Awareness Month](#), the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) wants to spotlight sickle cell trait (SCT), a common genetic condition with significant reproductive and health implications. More than 3 million Americans carry SCT, yet many are unaware of their status, which leads to uninformed reproductive decisions and missed opportunities for preventive health measures. Although SCT is identified through newborn screening, there is currently no standardized follow up system for documenting and counseling families. In 2023, of the more than 91,000 newborns screened in NYC, more than 2600 were identified with SCT (**Table 1**).

Primary care providers play a vital role in counseling individuals with SCT, as well as the parents of children with SCT so they can make informed decisions about their health and future. The NYC Health Department encourages clinicians to:

1. [Educate families](#) on the difference between SCT and sickle cell disease (SCD).
 - Reassure families that SCT carriers generally lead normal lives but inform them about the genetic implications.
2. Discuss the genetic risks of having a child with SCD.
 - Risk depends on whether the partner carries a trait such as beta thalassemia or other beta chain mutation such as hemoglobin S or hemoglobin C.
 - Referral to genetic counseling is standard of care; provide [information about genetic testing](#) of partners.
3. Discuss [family planning options](#) for partners at risk for having a child with [SCD](#).

- ## Data on SCT in New York City

Newborn screening is conducted routinely on all babies born in the state as part of New York State's comprehensive newborn screening program after the child is born. In 2023, 91,188 babies were screened in the five boroughs, and 2602 were born with SCT.

Table 1. New York State Sickle Cell Trait Newborn Screening by Borough, 2023

	Manhattan	Bronx	Brooklyn	Queens	Staten Island	Total
Sickle Cell Trait	317	960	764	481	80	2,602
Infants Screened	13,666	16,076	33,042	23,666	4,738	91,188
Data source: New York State Department of Health						

For more information on SCD and resources, refer to the [Health Advisory: NYC Health Department Recommendations on Destigmatizing and Improving Provider Attitudes Towards Pain in Sickle Cell Disease](#).

Thank you for protecting and promoting the health of all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Morse', with a stylized, flowing script.

Michelle Morse, MD, MPH
Chief Medical Officer
NYC Health Department

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toni Eyssallenne', with a stylized, flowing script.

Toni Eyssallenne, MD, PhD
Deputy Chief Medical Officer
NYC Health Department