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Know your sickle cell trait status, according to new campaign

BURBANK, Calif.—Do you know your sickle cell trait status? That’s the message of STAC, which stands for [Sickle Cell Trait Awareness Campaign](#), a five-year effort launched this month by Cayenne Wellness Center, which supports people living with sickle cell disease in California. The campaign — targeting students, athletes, parents and educators in California — stresses the importance of getting tested for sickle cell trait and knowing the risks associated with the gene.

Sickle cell trait affects 1- to 3-million Americans. People with the trait inherited the sickle cell gene from one of their parents and, for the most part, are asymptomatic. Sickle cell trait can never turn into sickle cell disease. In some cases, people with the trait can exhibit symptoms during strenuous physical activity or have children with sickle cell disease. One in 12 Black Americans and one in 100 Latino Americans have sickle cell trait.

“Knowing your sickle cell trait status is about knowing the risks,” said Dr. Carolyn Rowley, executive director of Cayenne Wellness Center. “If you and your partner have the trait, you’re more likely to have children with sickle cell disease, a painful, irreversible blood disorder, so it’s important to know your trait status for family planning. Additionally, athletes with sickle cell trait are more susceptible to suffering from physical issues during strenuous exercise and physical activity, which can be fatal. That’s why it’s so important to know what’s in your genes.”

While California screened newborns for sickle cell trait starting in 1990, many adolescents and adults remain unaware of their status. They can request their screening results from the state of California [online](#) or speak with their physician to get a hemoglobin electrophoresis test. STAC provides resources for determining status at [STAC-California.org](#).

The Sickle Cell Trait Awareness Campaign targets students and athletes from middle school through college in California as well as their parents, teachers and coaches using a wide range of tools. Outreach will include videos, social media, email newsletters, flyers, billboards, bus wraps, radio spots, public service announcements, newspapers and other outlets. Campaign ambassadors will visit schools to speak at student assemblies and partner with churches and social service agencies to raise awareness.

Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disease causing red blood cells to take a sickle shape, which leads to blockages that prevent oxygen from reaching parts of the body. As a result, people with sickle cell complications can experience pain, anemia, jaundice, stroke, organ damage and premature death. No universal cure exists. ([SickleCellDisease.net](#))

Cayenne Wellness Center and Children’s Foundation works to increase the quality of life for individuals diagnosed with sickle cell disease in California by ensuring expert, unbiased and comprehensive care. Based in Burbank, California, Cayenne Wellness Center provides education and awareness for health care providers, patients and the general public, maintains a grassroots network of individuals and institutions and conducts advocacy for people with sickle cell disease. ([CayenneWellness.org](#))