

increase, cells to clump together more readily, and microcirculation to become blocked. The concentration of hemoglobin S in the circulation is the major determination of sickling. Bone pain and splenic infarction may occur<sup>23</sup>.

Most of these individuals have sickle cell trait and are largely asymptomatic, while a few have a far more severe condition, sickle cell anemia. Those with sickle cell anemia probably already know about their disease, but those with only sickle cell trait may be unaware of the problem and, therefore, are more likely to go to high altitude and experience problems.

Exposure to the hypoxia at high altitude may precipitate a sickle cell crisis among those patients with sickle cell anemia. These individuals should not attempt to go to high altitude. Even the modest hypoxemia associated with airline travel may precipitate symptoms in susceptible individuals.

- Consider providing supplemental oxygen to those individuals with sickle cell anemia during aircraft flights. Travel by commercial airline generally is safe for patients with sickle cell trait, however, rarely, they may experience symptoms during airplane flights. Similarly, those with sickle cell trait generally tolerate altitudes of 8000-10,000 (2440-3048m) without difficulty, although a few may become symptomatic.

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