Hemoglobin C disease

Hemoglobin C disease is a blood disorder passed down through families. It leads to a type of anemia, which occurs when red blood cells break down earlier than normal.

Causes

Hemoglobin C is an abnormal type of hemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen. It is a type of hemoglobinopathy. The disease is caused by a problem with a gene called beta globin.

The disease most often occurs in African Americans. You are more likely to have hemoglobin C disease if someone in your family has had it.

Symptoms

Most people do not have symptoms. In some cases, jaundice may occur. Some people may develop gallstones that need to be treated.

Exams and Tests

A physical exam may show an enlarged spleen.

Tests that may be done include:

- Complete blood count
- Hemoglobin electrophoresis
- Peripheral blood smear
- Blood hemoglobin

Treatment

In most cases, no treatment is needed. Folic acid supplements may help your body produce normal red blood cells and improve the symptoms of the anemia.

Outlook (Prognosis)

People with hemoglobin C disease can expect to lead a normal life.

Possible Complications

Complications may include:

- Anemia
- Gallbladder disease
- Enlargement of the spleen

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your health care provider if you have symptoms of hemoglobin C disease.

Prevention

You may want to seek genetic counseling if you are at high risk for the condition and are considering having a baby.

Alternative Names

Clinical hemoglobin C

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