

***Sickle Cell Center***  
***Medical College of Georgia***

**USE OF HYDROXYUREA IN PATIENTS WITH SICKLE CELL ANEMIA**

Hydroxyurea (HU/Hydra) is being prescribed for you as a treatment for your sickle cell disease. This medication has been proven to reduce the number of painful crisis you will experience as well as reduce the number of times you must be hospitalized for pain. In order for this medication to be effective, it **MUST** be taken as directed. The information below will explain hydroxyurea, what it is, how it works, and how to take it.

**Background of Hydroxyurea:**

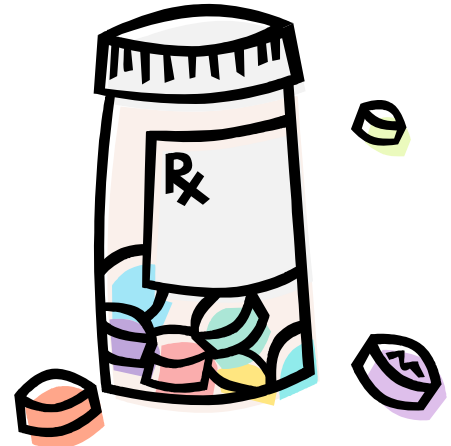
The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has conducted a multi-center clinical study of hydroxyurea in the treatment of sickle cell anemia. It ended January 1995. HU had been used in the treatment of various blood disorders for many years before the NIH study began. When the study ended, HU had been shown to be effective in improving anemia, decreasing pain crisis in sickle cell disease, and in improving survival.

**How it Works:**

HU works by raising the amount of fetal hemoglobin (“baby” hemoglobin) in the red blood cells as they are being formed in the bone marrow. These cells are less likely to sickle and be destroyed so they last longer. Your body clears HU within 6 hours or so unless kidney function is decreased. The effect of HU is slow and a big increase in fetal hemoglobin may take up to 6 months, which is why it is important to continue the medication everyday along with Folic Acid.

**Treatment:**

Your dose of HU is based on how much you weigh. Usually, one, two or three 500 mg capsules should be taken each day all together, at the same time each day, with or without food. It is important to remember that the capsules must be taken together once every day. There have been rare side effects such as rashes, hair loss, nausea, vomiting, or headaches reported by our patients. HU affects the bone marrow. Patients on this medication should have their blood counts checked at regular intervals as recommended by their physicians.



**Other Considerations:**

There has been some concern about women taking HU and getting pregnant. We have not detected any birth defects in the patients who got pregnant while taking the medication. However, it is recommended our patients avoid pregnancy when they are on HU. Weight gain of 3-5 pounds on average may occur while taking HU. This occurs in a few patients, but it is impossible to predict who will gain weight and who will not.

**For additional information regarding the use of Hydroxyurea in sickle cell anemia, contact:**

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