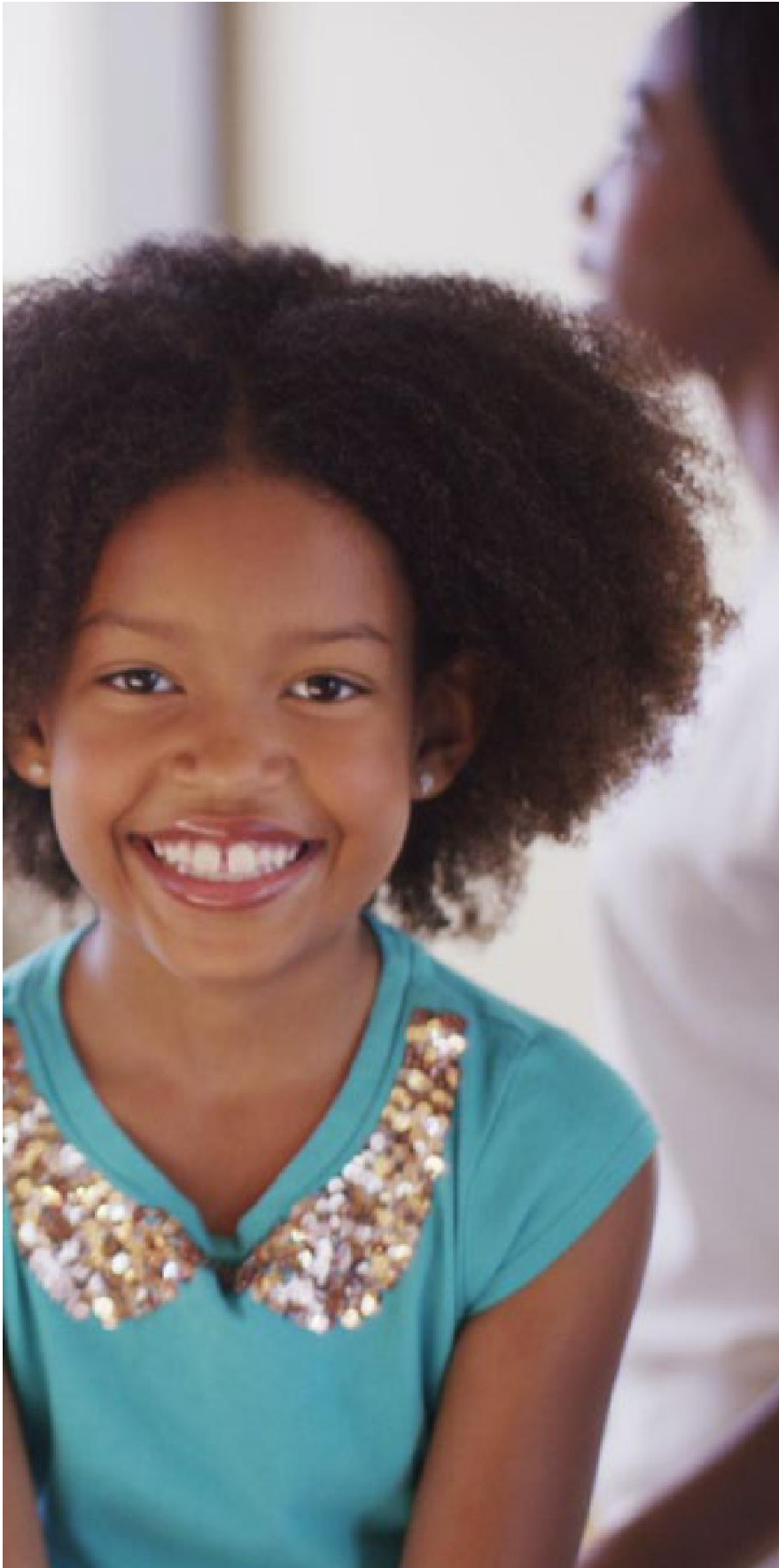




## Living With Sickle Cell Disease

**Overview**

If you or someone you love has been diagnosed with sickle cell disease, you may be facing some unexpected challenges. Here are some things you can do to manage sickle cell disease.

**Take an active role in your care**

First, learn all you can about the condition. Take medications as directed, and schedule regular checkups. Develop a good relationship with your doctor, and ask questions when you don't understand something.

**Take care of your body**

Focus on physical health. Plan nutritious meals. Make time for regular exercise and for sleep. If you have sickle cell disease, don't smoke. Stay away from other people who do. Don't drink too much alcohol, either. When you do, drink extra water so you don't get dehydrated.

**Take care of your mind**

You need to focus on mental health, too. Try to reduce stress levels. Watch for signs of depression. If you are depressed, tell someone. Talk to your doctor so you can get the treatment you need.

**Prevent and control complications**

Avoid situations that can cause a sickle cell crisis. Extreme heat or cold, fast changes in temperature, overexertion and dehydration are all triggers. Flying in an unpressurized airplane is, too.

**Cope with pain**

Finally, if you have ongoing pain from sickle cell disease, talk to your doctor about how to control it. Things like warm baths, relaxing activities and massages may help you. You may also benefit from pain medications.

**Conclusion**

If you take an active role in your care and follow your doctor's advice, you can learn to manage sickle cell disease successfully.