

WELLESLEY COLLEGE

PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND ATHLETICS

Dear Wellesley College Student Athlete and Guardians,

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of recent NCAA legislation that will require your immediate attention. In January 2013, the NCAA Division III Legislative Council approved legislation that requires that all Division III student-athletes, beginning with their initial year of eligibility (freshmen and transfers), receive testing for sickle cell trait, show proof of prior sickle cell testing, or sign a waiver releasing an institution from liability if they choose to decline testing.

Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood condition that can be found in a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. If a person receives a sickle cell gene from both parents they will inherit sickle cell disease. If he/she inherits only one sickle cell gene, then they are said to have “sickle cell trait”. Sickle cell trait is generally benign and consistent with a long and healthy life. However, when exercising vigorously particularly in hot conditions those with sickle cell trait are at a higher risk for heat illness problems and even death. During intense, sustained exercise, hypoxia (low oxygen) in muscles may cause sickling of red blood cells (red blood cells changing from a normal disc shape to a crescent or “sickle” shape), which can accumulate in the bloodstream and block blood vessels, leading to collapse from the rapid breakdown of muscles starved for blood.

Listed below are some facts you need to know about sickle cell trait:

- Sickle cell trait occurs in about 8 percent of the U.S. African-American population, and between 1 in 2,000 to 1 in 10,000 in the Caucasian population.
- Although sickle cell trait is most predominant in African-Americans and those of Mediterranean, Middle-Eastern, Indian, Caribbean, and South and Central American ancestry, persons of all races and ancestry may test positive for sickle cell trait.
- Most U.S. states test at birth, but most student-athletes with sickle-cell trait don't know they have it.

Effective for the 2013-2014 academic year and going forward, all Division III student-athletes beginning with their initial year of eligibility (first years and transfers) must complete one of the following prior to participating in athletically related activities (i.e. conditioning, weightlifting and /or practice):

- Submit test results from a recent blood test (sickle cell solubility test) for sickle cell trait signed by a licensed physician.
- Submit proof of prior testing (sickle cell solubility test) such as done at birth and signed by a licensed physician.
- Submit a signed waiver releasing Wellesley College for any liability and received additional education about sickle cell before taking part in athletics.

Student-athletes or parents may request this information from their primary care physician as sickle cell

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trait/disease was included in the infant screening blood test beginning in 1988. If your pediatrician does not have this information, we request that you are tested through your primary care physician's office. Testing for sickle cell trait is rather inexpensive with tests usually costing in the range of \$15 - \$35 and usually covered by your health insurance. Results of testing generally take several days or up to a week to return to the physician. To explain this important NCAA requirement to your physician, it may be helpful to bring this letter with you, when requesting testing for sickle cell trait.

Results of your sickle cell solubility testing must be signed by a licensed physician and uploaded with your Wellesley College Health History information prior to engaging in athletically related activities. There will be a potential delay of several days before you will be allowed to participate in athletically related activities if this information is not submitted to the Wellesley College Health Service prior to receiving your pre-participation exam.

Wellesley College strongly urges all student-athletes to get tested so that you know your status with regard to sickle cell trait. You will need to satisfy the requirements listed in this letter prior to entering Wellesley College. **Your immediate attention to this issue is required and we strongly urge you to be tested if you don't have access to previous sickle cell screening results.** If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact Kristen Weeks, PhD, ATC, LAT, Director of Sports Medicine.

The waiver and a copy of this letter will be posted on the Sports Medicine web site (www.wellesleyblue.com) under the link "Forms". Without the completion of this requirement you will not be able to receive your pre participation exam and will be delayed in beginning athletic related activities.

Again, thank you for your prompt and immediate attention to this letter.

Sincerely,



Kristen Weeks, PhD, ATC, LAT
Director of Sports Medicine and Student Wellbeing
Wellesley College

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