



## Student card



# Blood donations enable student to live her life

**Awele Nwosu-Akeh, 17, was diagnosed with sickle cell anaemia when she was 10. She has been in hospital many times but is determined not to let her illness affect her life, despite the challenges it presents.**

“Being a teenager with sickle cell can be difficult. I sat my GCSE exams in hospital but I couldn’t write myself so someone wrote for me. It was hard but I am glad I did the exams as I earned the grades I needed to study for a BTEC in Media at college.”

Awele hopes to go on to university when she has finished her college course. As she receives regular blood transfusions, and could potentially spend longer in hospital if she becomes unwell, her tutors have allowed her extra time to finish the course if she needs it.



|| I have a blood transfusion every four weeks to keep my haemoglobin levels healthy. I am very grateful to all the people who give up their time to donate the blood I need to survive. ||

Find more real stories at:  
[www.giveandletlive.co.uk](http://www.giveandletlive.co.uk)

**NHS**  
**Blood and Transplant**



## Fact file

- 1 Our bodies get the oxygen they need through the red blood cells. These cells contain haemoglobin, a molecule that is the perfect shape to both pick up and release oxygen easily.
- 2 Mis-shapen haemoglobin causes 'sickle' shaped red blood cells which can't pass easily through the body's narrow blood vessels – this can cause people with sickle cell anaemia terrible pain – or to suffer a 'crisis'.
- 3 Some people may only have a sickle cell crisis every few years, while others have many in a year. Repeated crises can cause permanent damage to the kidneys, lungs, bones, eyes and the central nervous system.
- 4 People with sickle cell anaemia often have one of the rarer blood groups.
- 5 People of African and African-Caribbean descent are the most likely to have sickle cell anaemia.

## Live debates

Choose one or more of the following statements to debate as a group. Write the arguments for and against the statements and decide which side you are on. Do all the members of your group agree?

- "I can understand why it is important to give blood, but I am frightened of needles."
- "Giving blood on a regular basis sounds like a good idea, but I would not do it as I might catch something."
- "They won't want my blood as I drink and smoke."
- "They don't need my blood as it is a really common type."

## Getting into their shoes

- Awele is a student and she has to have regular blood transfusions. Put yourself in her shoes and describe how you think she feels about life.
- Thinking about people like Awele, what arguments could you use to encourage people in the local community to give blood?
- Work in pairs to take on the roles of a patient who has had blood and a young person who wants to give blood but is too scared. What might they say to each other? What might the young person be afraid of – needles, pain, infection...?