

INFORMATION

information



VICTORIA

inc. OSTEOPOROSIS VICTORIA

SJOGREN'S SYNDROME

What is it?

Sjogren's syndrome is a disorder in which the glands which produce tears, saliva and sweat are attacked by the immune system (a system of cells which normally protects us from infection). The result is abnormal dryness of the mouth, eyes and/or other mucous membranes. In some people this can be mild, in others it can be more troublesome with the development of rashes, arthritis and possible lung and kidney involvement.

Why does it occur?

The cause of Sjogren's syndrome is unknown. It can occur alone (primary Sjogren's) or can be associated with other conditions (secondary Sjogren's) such as rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus and other so called connective tissue diseases.

Who does it affect?

Sjogren's syndrome most commonly develops in women, between the ages of 40 and 50 years, but can occur in men and women at any age.

Outlook

Usually the outlook for people with Sjogren's syndrome is very positive. Although there is no cure, proper treatment should provide comfort and relief.

The symptoms

Symptoms may include any of the following:

- Dry eyes/mouth/nose
- Swelling and pain in the joints

- Dry cough
- Fatigue
- Oral yeast infections
- Little or no tears
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing food.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis will usually involve a physical examination and medical history and may include further tests such as a chest X-ray, and other laboratory tests. These tests can help to rule out other causes of the symptoms.

The main test to help diagnose Sjogren's Syndrome is called a Shirmer's test. This test involves using a strip of blotting paper to measure the amount of tear formation. Blood tests and a biopsy of the lip can also help to confirm a diagnosis of Sjogrens.

Management

Management depends on the parts of the body affected and may include:

- Medications
- Artificial tears and lubricating ointments for the eyes
- Artificial saliva, mouth rinses or lozenges
- Moisturisers
- Avoidance of drying conditions, eg drafts from heaters and air conditioners, eye exposure to sun and wind.

Education and Support

A better understanding of Sjogren's Syndrome will greatly assist you in making

decisions about the management of your condition. Arthritis Victoria's education programs can assist you to develop the skills and knowledge needed to make these decisions. They also provide opportunities to meet others in similar situations. Arthritis Victoria can also put you in touch with local support groups, other relevant organizations and appropriate exercise groups for your condition.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Resource Centre

- Dauphin, Sue (1993), *Understanding Sjogren's syndrome*, Pixel Press, Tequesta, FL.
- *The Arthritis Foundations tips for good living with arthritis* (2001), Arthritis Foundation of America, Atlanta, GA.
- *The new Sjogren's syndrome handbook* (2005), Oxford University Press, New York, NY.

*All listed books and videos are available on loan from the Arthritis Victoria Resource Centre to members. If you would like to find out more about becoming a member, call (03) 8531 8000.

Courses

Arthritis Victoria Self management courses and exercise classes. Call 03 8531 8000 for information on the course or class most suited to your needs.

Websites

- Arthritis Vic: www.arthritisvic.org.au
- Arthritis USA: www.arthritis.org
- Arthritis Research Campaign UK: www.arc.org.uk
- National Institute for Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Skin: www.nih.gov/niams
- American College of Rheumatology: www.rheumatology.org
- Medlineplus: www.medlineplus.gov
- American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association: www.aarda.org
- Sjogren's Syndrome Foundation USA: www.sjogrens.com
- American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association USA : www.aarda.org

Support Groups/Self Help Groups

For information about the support group nearest you, phone our Community Development Co-ordinator on (03) 8531 8000.

ARTHRITIS VICTORIA

If you would like further information please contact our telephone information service on

(03) 8531 8000 or **1800 011 041** (country callers)



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Prepared by Education & Services staff, Arthritis Victoria, November 2002. This material is for your information and is not intended to be medical advice. You are encouraged to review the information provided with your doctor or relevant health professional.