

## Guillain-Barré Syndrome

### Overview:

- It is a rare disorder that mostly affects nerves throughout the body.
- It occurs because the immune system attacks parts of the nervous system.
- The first symptoms are usually weakness, tingling and numbness in extremities.
- The exact cause of the syndrome is still unknown.
- There are treatments that reduce the severity of the disease and relieve its symptoms.

### Definition:

It is a rare disease in which the peripheral nerves are attacked and damaged by the immune system. It occurs at all ages but more commonly in adults with varying degrees of weakness. Although rare, it can lead to complete paralysis of the body.

### Other names:

Guillain-Barré syndrome.

### Types:

- Acute inflammatory demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy: the most common.
- Miller Fisher syndrome.
- Acute motor axonal neuropathy: less common.
- Acute motor-sensory axonal neuropathy: less common.

### Causes:

The cause of Guillain-Barré syndrome is unknown, but it is often preceded by an infectious (viral or bacterial) disease, such as respiratory or gastrointestinal infections. The immune system begins to attack the nerves, causing damage



and inflammation in the layer coating the nerve fibers (myelin), and thus preventing the nerves from transmitting nerve signals to the brain and leading to weakness, numbness or paralysis.

#### **Risk Factors:**

- Age.
- Viral or bacterial infections (especially with campylobacter).
- Surgeries.
- Lymphoma.
- AIDS.

#### **Symptoms:**

- Numbness, tingling and weakness in extremities.
- Unsteady walking.
- Difficulty with eye or face movement.
- Rapid heart rate.
- Low or high blood pressure.
- Difficulty breathing.

#### **When to see a doctor?**

You should see a doctor in case you have the previous symptoms and signs in addition to choking on saliva or difficult speaking, chewing or swallowing.

#### **Complications:**

- Difficulty breathing.
- Heart and blood pressure disorders.
- Problems with bowel and bladder function.
- Permanent numbness.
- Thromboembolism.
- Complete paralysis of the body.
- Bedsores.



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### Diagnosis:

- It is difficult to diagnose Guillain-Barré in its early stages because of the many disorders that may manifest with similar symptoms. Tests include:
- Physical examination.
- Medical history.
- Taking a sample from the spinal fluid (lumbar puncture).

### Treatment:

There is no known cure for this syndrome, but there are drugs that reduce the severity and alleviate the symptoms. These include:

- Replacing the plasma to get rid of certain antibodies that contribute to the immune system attack on peripheral nerves.
- Immunoglobulin (intravenous immunoglobulin): this contains antibodies taken from blood donors to block the antibodies causing the damage.
- Drugs to relieve the symptoms (such as: analgesics).
- Rehabilitation: through physical, functional and speech therapy.

### Prevention:

- There is no preventive measure that can be taken to prevent the disease, as its cause is still unknown.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Is it a genetic disease?**

No, it is not a genetic disease and is not transmitted from one person to another.

- **How long does it take to recover after treatment?**

The period varies depending on several factors, including: the severity of the disease, how fast the diagnosis is made and the treatment plan is initiated, the body response to treatment and the neurological symptoms in particular and the other symptoms in general.

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