

# What is sarcoidosis?

Sarcoidosis is an inflammatory disease in which granulomas, or clumps of inflammatory cells, form in various organs. This causes organ inflammation. Sarcoidosis may be triggered by your body's immune system responding to foreign substances, such as viruses, bacteria, or chemicals.

The areas of the body commonly affected by sarcoidosis include:

Lymph Nodes  
Eyes  
Liver  
Spleen

Lungs  
Skin  
Heart  
Brain

# What causes sarcoidosis?

The exact cause of sarcoidosis is unknown. However, gender, race, and genetics can increase the risk of developing the condition:

- Sarcoidosis is more common in women than in men.
- People of African-American descent are more likely to develop the condition.
- People with a family history of sarcoidosis have a significantly higher risk of getting the disease.

Sarcoidosis rarely occurs in children. Symptoms usually appear in people between the ages of 20 and 40.

# What are the symptoms of sarcoidosis?

Some people with sarcoidosis don't have any symptoms. However, general symptoms may include:

Fatigue  
Weight loss  
Dry Mouth  
Abdominal swelling

Fever  
Joint Pain  
Nosebleeds  
Nightsweats

Symptoms vary depending on the part of your body that's affected by the disease. Sarcoidosis can occur in any organ, but it most commonly affects the lungs. Lung symptoms can include:

A dry cough  
Wheezing

Shortness of Breath  
Chest pain around your breastbone

Skin symptoms can include:

Skin rashes  
Hair loss

Skin sores  
Raised scars

Nervous system symptoms can include:

Seizures  
Headaches

Hearing loss

Eye symptoms can include:

Dry eyes  
Eye pain  
A burning sensation in your eyes

Itchy eyes  
Vision loss  
A discharge from your eyes

# How is sarcoidosis diagnosed?

It can be difficult to diagnose sarcoidosis. Symptoms can be similar to those of other diseases, such as arthritis or cancer. Your doctor will run a variety of tests to make a diagnosis.

Your doctor will first perform a physical examination to:

Check for skin bumps or a rash

Look for swollen lymph nodes

Listen to your heart and lungs

Check for an enlarged liver or spleen

Based on the findings, your doctor may order additional diagnostic tests:

- A chest X-ray can be used to check for granulomas and swollen lymph nodes.
- A chest CT scan is an imaging test that takes cross-sectional pictures of your chest.
- A lung function test can help determine whether your lung capacity has become affected.
- A biopsy involves taking a sample of tissue that can be checked for granulomas.

Your doctor may also order blood tests to check your kidney and liver function.

# How is sarcoidosis treated?

There's no cure for sarcoidosis. However, symptoms often improve without treatment. Your doctor may prescribe medications if your inflammation is severe. These can include corticosteroids or immunosuppressive medications (medications that suppress your immune system), which can both help reduce inflammation.

Treatment is also more likely if the disease affects your:

Eyes  
Heart

Lungs  
Nervous system

The length of any treatment will vary. Some people take medication for one to two years. Other people may need to be on medication for much longer.

## What are the potential complications of sarcoidosis?

Most people who are diagnosed with sarcoidosis don't experience complications. However, sarcoidosis can become a chronic, or long-term, condition. Other potential complications may include:

Lung infection  
Glaucoma  
Abnormal heart beat  
Infertility or difficulty conceiving

Cataracts  
Kidney failure  
Facial paralysis

In rare cases, sarcoidosis causes severe heart and lung damage. If this occurs, you may need immunosuppressive medications.

It's important to contact your doctor if you have:

Breathing difficulties  
Changes in your vision or loss of vision  
Sensitivity to light

Heart palpitations  
Eye pain  
Facial numbness

These can be signs of dangerous complications

Your doctor may recommend that you see an optometrist or ophthalmologist because this disease can affect your eyes without causing immediate symptoms.

# What is the outlook for someone with sarcoidosis?

The outlook is generally good for people with sarcoidosis. Many people live relatively healthy, active lives. Symptoms often improve with or without treatment in about two years.

Treatments generally fall into two categories -- maintenance of good health practices and drug treatment. Good health practices include:

- Getting regular check-ups with your health care provider
- Eating a well-balanced diet with a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables
- Drinking enough fluids every day
- Getting six to eight hours of sleep each night
- Exercising regularly and managing your weight
- Quitting smoking

Drug treatments are used to relieve symptoms and reduce the inflammation of the affected tissues. The oral corticosteroid prednisone is the most commonly used treatment. Fatigue and persistent cough are usually improved with steroid treatment. If steroids are prescribed, you should see your doctor at regular intervals so that he or she can monitor the disease and the side effects of treatment. Other treatment options include methotrexate(Otrexup, Rheumatrex), hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil), and other drugs.

# What can happen as the disease progresses?

In many people with sarcoidosis, the disease appears briefly and then disappears without the person even knowing they have the disease. Twenty percent to 30% of people have some permanent lung damage. For a small number of people, sarcoidosis is a chronic condition. In some people, the disease may result in the deterioration of the affected organ. Rarely, sarcoidosis can be fatal. Death usually is the result of complications with the lungs, heart, or brain.

For more information on Sarcoidosis go to:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/sarcoidosis>

<https://www.webmd.com/lung/arthritis-sarcoidosis#1>

<http://www.lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/sarcoidosis/sarcoidosis-symptoms-causes-risks.html>