

Sjögren Syndrome

What is Sjögren syndrome?

Sjögren (SHOW-grin) syndrome is a disease that causes a dry mouth and dry eyes. It is an autoimmune disease, which happens when your body's immune system attacks your own cells. Most people with Sjögren syndrome have very mild symptoms, but it may affect other organs, such as the bowel, joints, kidneys, lungs, nervous system, and skin.

Who gets it and why?

Sjögren syndrome is one of the most common autoimmune diseases. It usually affects women in their late 40s and early 50s. People with Sjögren syndrome may have other autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis or lupus. Doctors don't know what causes Sjögren syndrome.

How do I know if I have Sjögren syndrome?

Most people with Sjögren syndrome have dry eyes and a dry mouth for months. Your eyes may feel gritty or itchy. Your mouth will be dry,

and you may have trouble swallowing, eating dry foods, or even speaking. You should see your doctor if you think you might have Sjögren syndrome.

How is it treated?

There are several artificial tear and saliva substitutes that may help your symptoms. Your doctor can prescribe other medicines that will help your body make more tears and saliva. Depending on your symptoms, you might also need medicines for your immune system.

Is there a cure?

No, Sjögren syndrome is a lifelong disease.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

The Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation
Web site: <http://www.sjogrens.org/>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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