

LIVING WITH VASCULITIS

General Information About Outcomes

The course of vasculitis is unpredictable and depends on the type and severity of the disease.

Vasculitis may:

- Go into remission. If caught early it may respond well to treatment and go into remission.
- Reoccur. These reoccurrences are called flares, and they are generally difficult to predict. Flares can sometimes happen when the doctor takes the patient off of a medicine or alters the dose or type. Also, certain types of vasculitis are more likely to flare than others, and some patients are more likely to experience flares than others.
- Remain chronic without remission. In these cases, vasculitis can usually be controlled with continuing medicine treatments for an extended period of time.
- Not respond well to treatment. This can lead to disability or even death. This is rare.

Ongoing Health Care Needs

The medicines used to treat vasculitis can have significant side effects. Your doctor may adjust the type or dose of medicine you take to lessen the side effects. In cases in which remission occurs, the doctor may carefully withdraw medicines but still require careful monitoring of flares. Patients who continue taking medicines should stay under the careful watch of their doctor to monitor and control side effects. Patients also should always monitor their health, side effects, and symptoms and discuss any changes with their doctor.

Key Points

Vasculitis is an inflammation of blood vessels in the body. In vasculitis, the body's immune system mistakenly attacks the body's own blood vessels, causing them to become inflamed.

The inflammation can cause disruption of blood flow to parts of the body, which can lead to tissue damage or even death.

Vasculitis can affect any blood vessel or organ in the body.

The exact cause of the inflammation in vasculitis is unknown, but it is sometimes a side effect of the body's normal immune system response.

Vasculitis can affect people of all ages and either gender. Some types of vasculitis are more likely to occur in certain populations than others.

There are many types of vasculitis, and the signs and symptoms vary widely in type and severity. They may be specific and affect a particular organ, or they may be nonspecific, causing general aches, pains, and fatigue (feeling tired).

Laboratory tests are usually performed to confirm a diagnosis of vasculitis. There are many different tests that may be run, depending on the signs and symptoms present and where they are in the body.

Vasculitis is typically treated with prescription medicines with the goal of stopping the inflammation in the blood vessels and relieving symptoms.

Corticosteroid medicines or cytotoxic medicines are typically the drugs used to treat vasculitis. The course of a case of vasculitis is often difficult to predict. Vasculitis may go into remission, reoccur, remain chronic, or, in rare cases, lead to severe disability or death.

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http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/vas/vas_all.html

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