

TAKAYASU'S ARTERITIS (TA)

What is Takayasu's arteritis?

Takayasu's arteritis (TA) is a rare form of vasculitis that affects medium and large sized blood vessels. These vessels are primarily of the aorta (the main blood vessel that leaves the heart) and its large branches going to the arms, abdominal organs, legs and the head.

What causes TA?

There is no known cause of TA, although genetics have been associated with increased frequency in several studies.

Who gets TA?

TA is found more commonly in women (80-90%) than in men. People who get the disease are usually between the ages of 10 and 40 years when the disease starts. The disease affects people around the world, but is most common in Asians, especially in Japan.

What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms when TA first develops include lack of energy, weight loss, weakness and low-grade fever. As the disease progresses, the arms and legs may become cool, and pain may develop with use. Other symptoms include joint pain, muscle weakness, skin lesions, chest pain, shortness of breath, anemia and coughing up blood if the lungs become affected. Dizziness, fainting, headaches, seizures, vision problems and difficulties thinking and remembering are also symptoms. Stomach pain, diarrhea and stomach bleeding can result from inflammation in the stomach or intestines. Inflammation of the vessels that supply the heart (coronary arteries) can cause chest pain and puts patients at higher risk of having a heart attack.

How is TA diagnosed?

Physical examination often demonstrates decreased pulses in the arms or legs and abdominal turbulence (bruits) in the neck and abdomen. Radiography (x-ray) of the chest may be used to look for changes in the aorta. Angiography or arteriography is used to help determine the location and appearance of vessels affected by the disease. CT, MRI and PET scanning may also be used.

What is the prognosis?

TA is a chronic disease. Inflammation may never completely go away. In some patients the disease eventually 'burns out' and symptoms and inflammation do not ever return.

What is the treatment?

The main drug used for treatment of TA is steroids. Treatment with this medicine usually stops TA from getting worse by reducing the inflammation associated with the disease. Approximately one-half of all patients with TA have disease that is ongoing and does not get completely better with the use of steroids. When this is the case, other drugs - called immunosuppressives - may reduce inflammation and be helpful in controlling symptoms of the disease.

What is Vasculitis?

Vasculitis is an inflammation of the blood vessels, arteries, veins or capillaries. Vasculitis is a family of diseases. The cause of vasculitis is unknown, but through research and treatment, outcomes have improved significantly over the past 20 years.

Continued research is essential for further advances in these diseases, which can be life-threatening.

About the Vasculitis Foundation

The Vasculitis Foundation (VF) is the largest international patient support group for people with vasculitis.

Through its website, newsletter, brochures, informational materials, medical consultants, symposia and chapters, VF raises awareness and educates its patients, family members and friends.



Support

Awareness

Research

www.VasculitisFoundation.org

800.277.9474