

WEGENER'S GRANULOMATOSIS (WG)

What is Wegener's granulomatosis?

Wegener's granulomatosis (WG) is an uncommon vasculitis that affects about one in 20,000 to one in 30,000 people. Symptoms are due to inflammation of the blood vessels that affect many tissues and organs in your body. Some consider WG an autoimmune disease, meaning the body's immune system attacks its own body tissues.

What causes WG?

There is no known cause of WG; but it is not contagious.

Who gets WG?

WG can occur at any age. It most often occurs in the 4th and 5th decade of life. Patients are divided equally between males and females. It appears that Caucasians are far more commonly affected than other racial groups.

What are the symptoms?

WG is systemic, meaning it affects the body as a whole. It affects the upper (sinuses and nose), and lower (lungs), respiratory system and frequently involves the kidneys, eyes, ears, throat, skin and other body organs.

About 90% of patients have symptoms of a 'cold,' 'runny nose,' or sinusitis that fail to respond to the usual therapeutic measures. Other symptoms include nasal membrane ulcerations and crusting, saddle-nose deformity, inflammation of the ear and eye, cough, pleuritis, rash and/or skin sores, fever, lack of energy, weakness, fatigue, loss of appetite, weight loss, arthritic joint pain, night sweats, and blood in urine. Not all patients experience all of these symptoms.

How is WG diagnosed?

Diagnosis is established by clinical and laboratory findings such as the ANCA blood test, other blood and urine tests, x-rays, and tissue biopsy.

What is the prognosis?

There is no cure for WG, but early diagnosis and proper treatment will be effective and the disease can usually be brought into remission. However, relapses are common but can be caught at their earliest and most treatable stage.

What is the treatment?

Patients with WG are commonly prescribed immunosuppressive drugs and steroids. Medications will be tapered and even eliminated over time if the patient remains in remission.

Many patients will also be prescribed an antibiotic to help prevent secondary lung infections.

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.



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www.VasculitisFoundation.org

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