



"As I see it, every day you do one of two things: build health or produce disease in yourself." - Adelle Davi

May is Huntington's disease Awareness Month

Huntington's disease

Huntington's disease is a disorder in which nerve cells in certain parts of the brain waste away, or degenerate. The disease is passed down through families. It has a broad impact on a person's functional abilities and usually results in movement, thinking (cognitive) and psychiatric disorders.

Most people with Huntington's disease develop signs and symptoms in their 30s or 40s, but the onset of disease may be earlier or later in life. HD is the most common genetic cause of abnormal involuntary writhing movements called chorea, which is why the disease was earlier called Huntington's chorea.

Causes:

Huntington's disease is caused by a genetic defect on chromosome 4. It is a familial disease caused by a mutation in the normal "huntingtin" gene which can be passed from parent to child. Each child of an HD parent has a 50-50 chance of inheriting the HD gene. If a child does not inherit the HD gene, he or she will not develop the disease and cannot pass it to subsequent generations.

Huntington's disease is an autosomal dominant disorder, which means that a person needs only one copy of the defective gene to develop the disorder.

Symptoms:

- Behavioral disturbances.
- Hallucinations.
- Irritability, restlessness.
- Mood swings.
- Paranoia.
- Psychosis.
- Facial movements, including grimaces.
- Head turning to shift eye position.
- Quick, sudden, jerking or writhing movements of the arms, legs, face, and other body parts (chorea).
- Slow, uncontrolled movements.
- Loss of judgment.
- Loss of memory.
- Anxiety, stress, and tension.
- Speech impairment.
- Muscle problems, such as rigidity or muscle contracture (dystonia).
- Slow or abnormal eye movements.

- 🔗 Impaired gait, posture and balance.
- 🔗 Difficulty in speech production or swallowing.
- 🔗 Difficulty organizing, prioritizing or focusing on tasks.
- 🔗 Lack of flexibility or the tendency to get stuck on a thought, behavior or action (perseveration).
- 🔗 Lack of impulse control that can result in outbursts, acting without thinking and sexual promiscuity.
- 🔗 Social withdrawal.
- 🔗 Insomnia.
- 🔗 Fatigue and loss of energy.
- 🔗 Frequent thoughts of death, dying or suicide.
- 🔗 Obsessive-compulsive disorder consisting of recurrent, intrusive thoughts and repetitive behaviors.
- 🔗 Mania, which can cause elevated mood, over activity, impulsive behavior and inflated self-esteem.
- 🔗 Bipolar disorder or alternating episodes of depression and mania.
- 🔗 Loss of previously learned academic or physical skills.
- 🔗 Rapid, significant drop in overall school performance.
- 🔗 Contracted and rigid muscles that affect gait (especially in young children).
- 🔗 Changes in fine motor skills that might be noticeable in skills such as handwriting.
- 🔗 Tremors or slight involuntary movements.
- 🔗 Seizures.

When to see a doctor:

See your doctor if you notice changes in your movements, emotional state or mental ability. The signs and symptoms of Huntington's disease can be caused by a number of different conditions. Therefore, it is important to get a prompt, thorough diagnosis.

Coping and support:

A number of strategies may help people with Huntington's disease and their families cope with the challenges of the disease.

Because Huntington's disease causes the progressive loss of function and death, it is important to anticipate care that will be needed in the advanced stages of the disease and near the end of life.

Prevention:

Genetic counseling is advised if there is a family history of Huntington's disease. Experts also recommend genetic counseling for couples with a family history of this disease who are considering having children.

Reference Links:

- 🔗 <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/huntingtons-disease/basics/prevention/con-20030685>
- 🔗 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001775/>
- 🔗 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huntington's_disease
- 🔗 [www.ninds.nih.gov › Disorders A - Z](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/A-Z)

For any enquiry or assistance please contact: wellness@medicaretpa.co.in

Disclaimer: No information contained here should be relied on in making health decisions. Always check with your doctor or other health care provider.