

# SJÖREN'S SYNDROME

## Sjören's Syndrome is a Chronic Illness and Can Last a Lifetime

### **Sjören's Syndrome is Often a Complication of Another Autoimmune Disease in Many Patients**

Between 400,000 and 3.1 million adults have Sjören's syndrome and the disease can affect anyone at any age. Symptoms can vary in type and intensity but many patients can live fairly normal lives with symptom control assistance.

Please use this as an educational reference guide to increase awareness on what Sjören's syndrome, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment.

### **01 | What is Sjören's syndrome?**

Sjören's syndrome is an autoimmune disease of the salivary and tear glands; involving inflammation of the glands and other tissues in the body. Autoimmune diseases are characterized by abnormal production of antibodies within the blood causing misdirection in the immune system, leading to inflammation of targeted tissues. The exact cause of Sjören's is not known however, many patients whom have other family members with autoimmune diseases are at a higher risk of autoimmune diseases.

### **02 | Symptoms**

Inflammation of the tear gland causes eye dryness and can progress into eye irritation, decreased tear production, "gritty" feeling in the eye, eye infection and abrasion of the cornea. Inflammation of the salivary glands leads to dry mouth, difficulty swallowing, dental decay, cavities, gum disease, mouth sores, swelling, impaired voice, abnormalities or loss of taste and dry cough. Complications arise from infections of the eyes, breathing passages and the mouth. Problems that may arise outside of gland inflammation include fatigue, joint pain, lymph node enlargement, muscle weakness as well as lung and kidney complications.

### **03 | Diagnosis**

Preliminary testing of symptoms is simple and includes a Schirmer's test to identify the dryness of the eye by placing a test strip under the eyelid and a salivary flow

test to measure saliva production. Further testing of salivary glands via biopsy and radiologic nuclear medicine salivary scans give a better confirmation of symptoms. The most accurate findings come from blood tests that confirm the presence of specific antibodies, rheumatoid factor, low red blood count or abnormal levels of inflammation markers.

### **04 | Treatment**

While Sjören's syndrome has no cure, many options are available for each specific symptom cause by the disease. Eye symptoms for dryness can be helped with drops, ointments and avoidance of fans, blow-dryers etc. There are also medicated drops to help reduce inflammation of the tear gland to improve function.

Symptoms within the mouth must be carefully observed and proper dental care is important. Drinking plenty of fluids, humidifying the air, prescription medications and glycerin swabs can help with these symptoms. Issues of fatigue, muscle and joint pains can be remedied with immune-suppression medications. To avoid complications, infections must be properly treated with cortisone or azathioprine.

For more information on Sjören's Syndrome and other rheumatologic conditions, please visit:

<http://www.rheumatology.org/>

***Did You Know?***  
*Most Sjören's syndrome patients are older females*

### **References**

[http://www.medicinenet.com/sjogrens\\_syndrome/article.htm](http://www.medicinenet.com/sjogrens_syndrome/article.htm)

<http://www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver/Diseases-Conditions/Sjogrens-Syndrom>