Guillain-Barré Syndrome

Guillain-Barré (ghee-yan bah-ray) syndrome is a disorder in which the body's immune system attacks part of the peripheral nervous system. The first symptoms of this disorder include varying degrees of weakness or tingling sensations in the legs. The weakness and abnormal sensations often spread to the arms and upper body.

These symptoms can increase in intensity until the muscles cannot be used at all and the patient is almost totally paralyzed -- considered a medical emergency. The patient is often put on a respirator to assist with breathing.

Most people, however, recover from even the most severe cases of Guillain-Barré syndrome, although some continue to have some degree of weakness.

Guillain-Barré syndrome is rare. It usually occurs a few days or weeks after the patient has had symptoms of a respiratory or gastrointestinal viral infection. Occasionally, surgery or vaccinations will trigger the syndrome. The disorder can develop over the course of hours or days, or it may take up to 3 to 4 weeks.

It is not known why Guillain-Barré strikes some people and not others, or what sets the disease in motion. What scientists do know is that the body's immune system begins to attack the body itself, causing what is known as an autoimmune disease.

There is no known cure for Guillain-Barré syndrome, but therapies can lessen the severity of the illness and accelerate the recovery in most patients. There are also a number of ways to treat the complications of the disease. Currently, plasmapheresis and high-dose immunoglobulin therapy are used.

Scientists are looking at the workings of the immune system to find which cells are responsible for carrying out the attack on the nervous system.

Source: The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

Web Sites

http://gbs-cidp.org/
GBS/CIDP Foundation International
375 East Elm St., Suite 101
Conshohocken, PA 19428
Phone: 610-667-0131, 866-224-3301 (Toll-free)
GBS/CIDP Foundation International offers information and interactive bulletin boards, research funding and a worldwide chapter organization to patients, caregivers and families affected by Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) and Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyneuropathy (CIDP).

http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/guillain-barre-syndrome/basics/definition/con-20025832
Mayo Clinic: Guillain-Barré Syndrome

MedlinePlus: Guillain-Barré Syndrome

http://www.merckmanuals.com/professional/neurologic_disorders/peripheral_nervous_system_and_motor_unit_disorders/guillain-barr%C3%A9_syndrome_gbs.html
Merck Manual: Guillain-Barré Syndrome

https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/All-Disorders/Guillain-Barr%C3%A9-Syndrome-Information-Page
National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke: Guillain-Barré Syndrome Information Page

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS): Guillaine-Barre Syndrome booklet

eMedicine: Pediatric Guillain-Barré Syndrome

http://www.shepherd.org/patient-programs/Guillain-Barre-Syndrome
Shepherd Center: Rehab for Guillain-Barre

Info on GBS and Zika virus:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Questions About Zika
According to the CDC “Current research suggests that Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS), an uncommon sickness of the nervous system, is strongly associated with Zika; however, only a small proportion of people with recent Zika virus infection get GBS”.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Areas at Risk for Zika
In 2018, no local mosquito-borne Zika virus transmission has been reported in the continental United States. However, it is still a threat in certain countries.

Hesperian: Zika Virus

Newsletters


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