

## HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE SJÖGREN'S?

Sjögren's ("SHOW-grins") is a systemic autoimmune disease that affects the entire body. Nine out of ten Sjögren's patients are women. The average age of diagnosis is around 40, although it can occur at all ages.

Researchers are not certain what causes Sjögren's, a disease in which the body attacks moisture-producing glands. Symptoms vary from person to person but may include:

- Dry, gritty or burning sensation in the eyes
- Difficulty talking, chewing or swallowing
- Dry or burning throat
- A change in taste or smell
- Joint pain
- Digestive problems
- Debilitating fatigue that interferes with daily life
- Dry mouth
- A sore or cracked tongue
- Dry or peeling lips
- Increased dental decay
- Vaginal and skin dryness
- Dry nose

To see *Way's Sjögren's Can Affect the Body*, visit [www.sjogrens.org/home/about-sjogrens/symptoms](http://www.sjogrens.org/home/about-sjogrens/symptoms).

Because there are many causes of Sjögren's symptoms, including side effects of some medications or the presence of other diseases, and because many of Sjögren's symptoms frequently overlap with or "mimic" those of other conditions such as menopause, allergies, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, and chronic fatigue syndrome, Sjögren's often is undiagnosed or misdiagnosed.

The symptoms of Sjögren's develop gradually and getting a diagnosis can take time. It currently takes an average of three years to receive a diagnosis of Sjögren's. Health care providers sometimes treat each symptom individually and may not recognize that a systemic disease is present, because Sjögren's may appear in many different forms in different patients.

Rheumatologists have primary responsibility for managing Sjögren's and can conduct a series of tests and ask about symptoms. Currently, there is no single test to confirm a diagnosis of Sjögren's. However, an international group of experts formulated classification criteria for Sjögren's which can help doctors arrive at a diagnosis. Patients may also be diagnosed and treated by specialists such as ophthalmologists, optometrists, dentists, otolaryngologists, and others depending on their complications.

Early diagnosis and proper treatment is critical for preventing serious complications and may greatly improve the quality of life for individuals living with Sjögren's. If you think you may have Sjögren's, you should consult your doctor immediately.

The Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation (SSF), the only non-profit organization focused on increasing research, education and awareness for Sjögren's offers a number of free resources to help patients learn more about the disease and how to cope with many of the symptoms and other challenges associated with the disease. Visit [www.sjogrens.com](http://www.sjogrens.com) for more information.