

Symptoms of autoimmune disorders can be managed??

Roumi Ghosh*

Department of Internal Medicine, University of Bangor, UK

Introduction

An autoimmune disorder occurs when a person's immune system mistakenly attacks their own body. There are around 80 different autoimmune disorders ranging in severity from mild to disabling, depending on which system of the body is under attack and to what degree.

There is generally no cure, but the symptoms of autoimmune disorders can be managed

An autoimmune disease is a condition in which your immune system mistakenly attacks your body. The immune system normally guards against germs like bacteria and viruses. When it senses these foreign invaders, it sends out an army of fighter cells to attack them. Normally, the immune system can tell the difference between foreign cells and your own cells. In an autoimmune disease, the immune system mistakes part of your body, like your joints or skin, as foreign. It releases proteins called autoantibodies that attack healthy cells.

Scientists know about more than 80 autoimmune diseases. Some are well known, such as type 1 diabetes, multiple sclerosis, lupus, and rheumatoid arthritis, while others are rare and difficult to diagnose. With unusual autoimmune diseases, patients may suffer years before getting a proper diagnosis. Most of these diseases have no cure. Some require lifelong treatment to ease symptoms.

Collectively, these diseases affect more than 24 million people in the United States. An additional eight million people have auto-antibodies, blood molecules that indicate a person's chance of developing autoimmune disease. Autoimmune diseases are affecting more people for reasons unknown. Likewise, the causes of these diseases remain a mystery.

Types of autoimmune disorders

Autoimmune disorders can affect nearly every organ and system of the body. Some autoimmune disorders include:

Diabetes (Type I): affects the pancreas. Symptoms include thirst, frequent urination, weight loss and an increased susceptibility to infection.

Graves' disease: affects the thyroid gland. Symptoms include weight loss, elevated heart rate, anxiety and diarrhoea.

Inflammatory bowel disease: Includes ulcerative colitis and possibly, Crohn's

disease. Symptoms include diarrhoea and abdominal pain.

Multiple sclerosis: Affects the nervous system. Depending on which part of the nervous system is affected, symptoms can include numbness, paralysis and vision impairment.

Psoriasis: Affects the skin. Features include the development of thick, reddened skin scales.

Rheumatoid arthritis: Affects the joints. Symptoms include swollen and deformed joints. The eyes, lungs and heart may also be targeted.

Scleroderma: Affects the skin and other structures, causing the formation of scar tissue. Features include thickening of the skin, skin ulcers and stiff joints.

Systemic lupus erythematosus: Affects connective tissue and can strike any organ system of the body. Symptoms include joint inflammation, fever, weight loss and a characteristic facial rash.

It can be hard to diagnose an autoimmune disorder, especially in its earlier stages and if multiple organs or systems are involved. Depending on the disorder, diagnosis methods may include:

- physical examination
- medical history
- blood tests, including those to detect autoantibodies
- biopsy
- x-rays

When the immune system determines that healthy cells are foreign, it begins to produce antibodies to fight off the healthy cells it believes to be the source of an illness or infection. When an autoimmune disease is suspected, a rheumatologist will administer tests to determine what antibodies are being produced. There are more than 80 potential autoimmune diseases and some of the most common areas affected can be:

- Joints and muscles
- Red blood cells
- Blood vessels
- Connective tissue

*Address for Correspondence: Roumi Ghosh, Department of Internal Medicine, University of Bangor, UK, Tel: 44 2233782730; E-mail: roumighos@gmail.com

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Received 01 May 2021; Accepted 17 May 2021; Published 24 May 2021

How to cite this article: Roumi Ghosh. "Symptoms of autoimmune disorders can be managed?" *J Bioanal Biomed* 13 (2021): 267.