



AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF MANITOBA

2A - 1717 Dublin Avenue, Winnipeg MB R3H 0H2

Tel. 204-831-1510 • Fax: 204-837-9023 • Toll Free: 1-866-718-1642 • www.alsmb.ca

KENNEDY'S DISEASE

Fact Sheet

What is Kennedy's Disease

- Kennedy's Disease (KD) is a rare neuromuscular disease and a form of adult-onset spinal muscular atrophy (SMA)
- Kennedy's Disease is the result of mutations in the Androgen Receptor gene on the X chromosome. There are small increases in one specific region of the gene. The larger the increases, the earlier the onset and the more pronounced the symptoms.
- It is also known as Spinal Bulbar Muscular Atrophy (SBMA).
- It affects the spinal and bulbar neurons causing muscle wasting (atrophy) predominantly in the legs, arms, face and throat.
- It is an inherited chromosomal X-linked recessive disease.
- Only males are fully affected.

How common is Kennedy's Disease?

- It is estimated that one in 40,000 people worldwide have KD.

Symptoms

Neurological

- Weakness of tongue and mouth muscles.
- Problems breathing (breathy speech pattern).
- Difficulty swallowing.
- Poor articulation.
- Changes in voice and speech (harsh or strained voice, decrease in range of pitch).
- Numbness.
- Hand tremors
- Decreased or absent deep tendon reflexes.

Muscular

- Twitching of muscles when at rest (Fasciculations).
- Cramps: Large muscle spasms.
- Increased calf size due to cramps.
- Loss of muscle bulk.

Other Symptoms

- Erectile dysfunction.
- Breast enlargement (Gynecomastia).
- Impotence.
- Decreased size and function of testicles.
- Low sperm count.

Other Facts and Characteristics

- Late onset: Symptoms usually develop in the late 30's or later.
- Progresses quite slowly. Those living with KD have a nearly normal lifespan.
- Females are rarely affected but can be carriers and experience a mild expression of the disease.

Diagnosis

- Many people are not diagnosed for years.
- Due to similarities in symptoms, many people are mis diagnosed with ALS.
- KD can be diagnosed easily with a simple DNA blood test.
- It is most often diagnosed between the ages of 20-50 years.

Treatment

- To date, KD is incurable and there are no treatments.
- Some people living with the disease do take prescribed medications to alleviate symptoms.
- Patients have reported that stretching exercises can help ease cramps and pain.

To learn more about Kennedy's Disease, visit:

www.kennedysdisease.org;

www.mdaua.org

To find a contact in or closest to your province, visit:

http://www.kennedysdisease.org/disc_contacts_canada.html

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