

# Kaposi Sarcoma: Symptoms



Kaposi sarcoma (KS) might not cause symptoms that are easy to notice until it grows and spreads. When it does cause symptoms, they can include:

## Lesions on the skin, in the mouth, or in the genital area

KS lesions are skin changes that most often start out as purple, red, or brown spots. They might be flat or raised. They seldom hurt. Sometimes the lesions grow as lumps just below the skin and don't have an abnormal color. KS lesions most often start on the feet or legs, on the face, inside the mouth or throat, or on the genitals.

Lesions inside the mouth often start on the roof of the mouth or on the gums. Chewing food can make them bleed. Or chewing may be painful and cause trouble eating.

## Lesions in other parts of the body

KS lesions can also start inside the body, such as in the digestive (GI) tract or in the lungs. If these lesions grow large enough, they might cause:

- **Digestive system problems.** KS lesions in the esophagus, stomach, intestines, or other part of the digestive tract can cause nausea, belly (abdominal) pain, and bleeding, which might show up as bloody or black stools. Lesions in this part of the body may also change the way food is digested, leading to diarrhea and weight loss. In rare cases, lesions can cause blockages in the digestive tract. This makes it hard to have a bowel movement.
- **Coughing, wheezing, or breathing problems.** Lesions can grow in the lungs. Lung lesions can cause chest pain, wheezing, cough, shortness of breath, and coughing up blood.

## Lymphedema

The lymph (lymphatic) system is a network of tiny vessels and small organs called lymph nodes. This system carries lymph all over the body. Lymph is a clear fluid that contains a few blood cells. The lymph system is part of the immune system. It helps protect the body and keep it healthy. It filters and drains lymph and cell waste away from all over the body.

In some people, the KS lesions block lymph nodes or lymph vessels. Fluid may then collect and cause swelling in part of the body. This swelling is called lymphedema. It may happen even when no lesions are seen on the skin. Swelling can happen anywhere in the body, including:

- In the legs and feet. This may make walking painful.
- In or around the genitals
- Around the eyes

## When to see your healthcare provider

Many of these symptoms can be caused by other health problems. Still, it's important to see a healthcare provider if you have these symptoms. Only a healthcare provider can tell if you have KS.

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