

# Pulmonary Sarcoidosis



Sarcoidosis is a disease that causes inflammation of the body tissues. This leads to small lumps called granulomas. The disease can affect any organ in the body. But it often starts in the lungs and lymph nodes.

## What causes sarcoidosis?

It is not known what causes sarcoidosis. It results from a problem with the body's immune system. People of any age, race, or gender can have it. It's seen more often in people between the ages of 20 and 40 and those of African or Scandinavian background. It's also more common in women than in men. Sarcoidosis may also be linked to being around dust, mold, or other infections or bacteria.

## How it affects the lungs

When you breathe in, you inhale air that has oxygen in it. The oxygen travels from the lungs to the blood. Then it is carried to the rest of the body. In some cases of pulmonary sarcoidosis, the lungs become scarred. This is called pulmonary fibrosis. This scarring can make it hard to take a full breath. The damage can also make it hard for oxygen to pass from the lungs into the blood.

To diagnose sarcoidosis, you will need to have pictures taken of your lungs. You may need a CT scan of your chest. You may have breathing tests done to measure how well your lungs are working. You will usually also need to have a biopsy done. This means a small piece of lung material has to be removed so it can be looked at. This test can show damage in your lung tissue and lymph nodes in your chest.

## Symptoms of pulmonary sarcoidosis

Many people have no symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they can include dry cough, tightness in the chest, and tiredness. Wheezing, shortness of breath, skin rashes, joint pain, kidney stones, vision problems, and loss of appetite can also occur. In some cases, pulmonary sarcoidosis stops getting worse. It may even go away. In other cases, the disease is long-lasting (chronic). It can cause permanent lung scarring (pulmonary fibrosis). It can also flare up after it has been inactive for a while.

## Treatment of pulmonary sarcoidosis

Many people don't need treatment. The disease may not cause symptoms, and it may go away on its own. Treatments that can be done to help ease symptoms. They can reduce inflammation and help prevent damage. Medicines are used to treat the disease. More than one may be used. They may be taken in pill form or by injection. Some common ones are listed below:

- **Prednisone.** This is an anti-inflammatory steroid (corticosteroid). It helps prevent or reduce inflammation that can harm lungs.
- **Methotrexate.** This medicine suppresses the immune system. It is commonly the first one used so that you can cut back on the dose of prednisone. This helps lower the long-term side effects of the steroid.
- **Azathioprine.** This medicine suppresses the immune system. It may be used alone or with prednisone. It helps reduce lung inflammation.
- **Cyclophosphamide.** This is another type of medicine that suppresses the immune system. It may be used with prednisone. You may be given it as a single dose if you have problems with prednisone.

Other medicines that may be used include anti-TNF medicines, such as infliximab and etanercept. Antimalaria medicines, such as hydroxychloroquine may help when skin, joints, or brain are affected.

Note: These medicines can have serious side effects. Talk with your healthcare provider about them. Don't stop taking a medicine unless your provider says it's OK. And tell your healthcare provider or pharmacist about all medicines you use. This includes over-the-counter medicines, herbs, and supplements.

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