

## **Stiff Person Syndrome**

### **➤ What is Stiff Person Syndrome?**

- Stiff Person Syndrome is a rare autoimmune movement disorder that affects the central nervous system (the brain and the spinal cord). People with this condition first experience a stiffening of the muscles of their trunk followed, over time by the development of stiffness and rigidity in the legs and other muscles in the body. Stiff Person Syndrome also called Moersch-Woltman Syndrome and formerly Stiff Man Syndrome can also cause painful muscle spasms. The muscle spasms occur randomly or can be triggered by noise, emotional distress, and light physical touch. Stiff Person Syndrome is extremely rare. Only about 1 out of every 1 million people have been diagnosed with this syndrome. Twice as many women have Stiff Person Syndrome as men.

### **➤ What are the signs/symptoms?**

- Symptoms can occur at any age but usually develop between the ages of 30 and 60. Stiff Person Syndrome is more likely seen in people with certain types of diseases including:
  - Autoimmune disorders like diabetes, thyroiditis, vitiligo, and pernicious anemia.
  - Certain cancers such as breast, lung, kidney, thyroid colon, and Hodgkin's Lymphoma.
- Symptoms can take several months to a few years to develop. Some patients remain stable for years; others slowly worsen. In most people with Stiff Person Syndrome, the trunk and abdomen muscles are the first to become stiff and enlarged. Symptoms include:
  - pain, muscle stiffness, muscle spasms, aching and discomfort, constant stiffness in legs, muscles, arms, and face, hunched posture, difficulty with mobility and uncontrolled falls.

### **➤ What is Stiff Person Syndrome a result of?**

- Researchers are not sure of the exact cause however, they believe it to be an autoimmune disorder, a condition where your immune system attacks healthy cells. Many people with this disorder make antibodies that attack an enzyme called glutamic acid decarboxylase (GAD). GAD plays a role in making a neurotransmitter called gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), which helps control muscle movement. It is thought that the immune system in people with Stiff Person Syndrome mistakenly attacks the GAD enzyme, which decreases the amount of GABA in the body.

### **➤ What are the complications of Stiff Person Syndrome?**

- Stiff Person Syndrome causes limited movement and muscle spasms. These issues can lead to complications including:
  - Anxiety and depression, dislocated or broken bones from severe muscle spasms, frequent falls, excessive sweating.
- The prognosis for Stiff Person Syndrome varies depending on a person's symptoms. The severity of the syndrome and the speed of decline vary from person to person. Over time, walking can become more and more difficult. In addition, a person's ability to perform daily, routine tasks may decline over time.

References: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/6076-stiff-person-syndrome>

