

## Short Note on Sjogren's Syndrome Diagnosis and Treatment

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### DESCRIPTION

Sjogren's syndrome is a chronic autoimmune disorder that primarily affects the exocrine glands, resulting in the dryness of mucous membranes, particularly the eyes and mouth. Sjogren's syndrome is a complex disease that can also affect other organs and systems in the body.

### Symptoms

The symptoms of Sjogren's syndrome are dry eyes and dry mouth. Patients often experience a gritty or burning sensation in their eyes, along with redness and light sensitivity. The decreased production of tears can lead to eye infections and corneal damage if left untreated. Dry mouth, known as xerostomia, can cause difficulty in swallowing, speaking, and an increased risk of dental cavities and gum disease.

However, Sjogren's syndrome is not limited to these symptoms alone. Many individuals with the condition may also experience fatigue, joint pain, and swelling. Other possible manifestations include skin rashes, dry skin, dry nose, vaginal dryness and prolonged or recurring bronchitis. In some cases, Sjogren's syndrome can affect organs such as the kidneys, liver, pancreas and lungs, leading to more serious complications.

### Causes and risk factors

The exact cause of Sjögren syndrome remains unknown. However, it is believed that a combination of genetic and environmental factors play a role in its development. Certain gene variations have been associated with an increased susceptibility to the condition. Additionally, viral infections and hormonal imbalances may trigger or contribute to the onset of Sjögren syndrome.

Sjögren syndrome can occur at any age, but it most commonly affects women between the ages of 40 and 60. It is estimated that approximately 90% of individuals with Sjögren syndrome are female. Other risk factors include a family history of autoimmune disorders and certain ethnic backgrounds, such as Scandinavian descent.

### Diagnosis

Diagnosing Sjogren's syndrome can be challenging because its symptoms can overlap with other autoimmune diseases. A comprehensive medical history, physical examination and specific tests are essential for an accurate diagnosis. Blood tests that measure certain antibodies associated with Sjogren's syndrome, such as anti-Sjogren's-Syndrome-related antigen A (anti-SSA) and anti-Sjogren's-Syndrome-related antigen B (anti-SSB), can be helpful in confirming the diagnosis.

Another diagnostic tool is the Schirmer's test, which involves placing a small strip of filter paper under the lower eyelid to measure tear production. A decreased tear volume suggests dry eye disease, a common feature of Sjogren's syndrome. Additionally, salivary gland biopsy may be performed to examine the glandular tissue and look for characteristic changes associated with the condition.

### Treatment

Currently, there is no cure for Sjogren's syndrome, but various treatment options are available to alleviate symptoms and improve the quality of life for individuals affected by the disease. The management of Sjogren's syndrome typically involves a multidisciplinary approach involving rheumatologists, ophthalmologists, dentists and other healthcare professionals.

**Symptomatic relief:** Artificial tears and lubricating eye drops can help relieve dry eye symptoms. Saliva substitutes, sugar-free gum and frequent sips of water can provide relief for dry mouth. Moisturizing creams and nasal sprays can alleviate dry skin and nasal passages.

**Medications:** Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) and corticosteroids may be prescribed to manage joint pain and inflammation. Immunosuppressive drugs, such as hydroxychloroquine, methotrexate or azathioprine, may be used in more severe cases to suppress the immune response and reduce organ involvement.

**Dental care:** Regular dental visits are crucial to managing the oral manifestations of Sjogren's syndrome. Dentists may

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recommend saliva stimulants, fluoride treatments and proper oral hygiene practices to prevent dental decay and gum disease.

**Eye care:** In addition to artificial tears, prescription eye drops containing cyclosporine or lifitegrast may be prescribed to

reduce inflammation and promote tear production. Punctal plugs, tiny silicone or gel inserts placed in the tear ducts, can help conserve tears.