



What Is Polyarteritis Nodosa?

Polyarteritis nodosa is more likely to affect individuals between the ages of 45 to 65 years.

1. Introduction

Polyarteritis nodosa (PAN) is a rare, serious inflammatory blood vessel disease where the middle and outer layers of an artery become swollen and damaged, eventually causing the tissues of the vessel to die. This inflammation can lead to the development of blood clots, restricting blood flow and damaging vital organs and tissues. PAN most commonly affects the kidneys, joints, intestinal tract, skin and muscles. Depending on the form of the disease, PAN may only affect the skin, a single body organ, or multiple organ systems.

2. Causes

The exact cause of PAN is unknown. The inflammatory process may be set in motion by a reaction to certain drugs or vaccines or as a reaction to a bacterial or viral infection. PAN has also been associated with hepatitis B infection.

3. Symptoms

PAN mimics many diseases, and since it can affect so many organ systems, there is a wide range of symptoms. The most common symptoms that present on onset are fever, sweats, weight loss and severe muscle and joint pains. Other symptoms include:

- + Fatigue
- + Abdominal pain
- + High blood pressure
- + Blood in the stool
- + Chest pain
- + Difficulty breathing
- + Numbness or tingling in the hands or feet
- + Sudden loss of strength in the hands or feet

4. Diagnosis

There is no single test available to diagnose this disease. Physicians will be able to base a diagnosis on symptoms and tests such as:

- + **Blood tests:** markers of inflammation may be elevated
- + **Imaging:** if PAN is suspected, an angiogram can detect narrowing of the blood vessels or aneurysms
- + **Biopsy:** most are taken from the skin, muscle or nerve tissue.

Did you know?

Polyarteritis nodosa has an estimated annual incidence of 3 to 4 cases per 100,000 people in the United States.

For more information on polyarteritis nodosa and supportive resources, please visit [vasculitisfoundation.org](https://www.vasculitisfoundation.org)

References:

- <https://www.mountsinai.org/health-library/diseases-conditions/polyarteritis-nodosa>.
- <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/polyarteritis-nodosa-pan>
- <https://www.hopkinsvasculitis.org/type-s-vasculitis/polyarteritis-nodosa/>
- <https://www.cedars-sinai.org/health-library/diseases-and-conditions/p/polyarteritis-nodosa.html>