Hereditary Neuropathies

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

Source

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Hereditary neuropathies are a group of inherited disorders affecting the peripheral nervous system. The hereditary neuropathies are divided into four major subcategories: hereditary motor and sensory neuropathy, hereditary sensory neuropathy, hereditary motor neuropathy, and hereditary sensory and autonomic neuropathy. The most common type is Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, one of the hereditary motor and sensory neuropathies. Symptoms of the hereditary neuropathies vary according to the type and may include sensory symptoms such as numbness, tingling, and pain in the feet and hands; or motor symptoms such as weakness and loss of muscle bulk, particularly in the lower leg and feet muscles. Certain types of hereditary neuropathies can affect the autonomic nerves, resulting in impaired sweating, postural hypotension, or insensitivity to pain. Some people may have foot deformities such as high arches and hammer toes, thin calf muscles (having the appearance of an inverted champagne glass) or scoliosis (curvature of the spine). The symptoms of hereditary neuropathies may be apparent at birth or appear in middle or late life. They can vary among different family members, with some family members being more severely affected than others. The hereditary neuropathies can be diagnosed by blood tests for genetic testing, nerve conduction studies, and nerve biopsies.