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Ataxia Telangiectasia

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

Source

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). [Ataxia Telangiectasia Information Page](#).

Ataxia-telangiectasia is a rare, childhood neurological disorder that causes degeneration in the part of the brain that controls motor movements and speech. The first signs of the disease are unsteady walking and slurred speech, usually occurring during the first five years of life. Telangiectasias (tiny, red "spider" veins), which appear in the corners of the eyes or on the surface of the ears and cheeks, are characteristic of the disease, but are not always present and generally do not appear in the first years of life. About 35 percent of those with A-T develop cancer, most frequently acute lymphocytic leukemia or lymphoma. The most unusual symptom is an acute sensitivity to ionizing radiation, such as X-rays or gamma rays. Many individuals with A-T have a weakened immune system, making them susceptible to recurrent respiratory infections. Other features of the disease may include mild diabetes mellitus, premature graying of the hair, difficulty swallowing, and delayed physical and sexual development. Children with A-T usually have normal or above normal intelligence.