

Vasculitis Syndromes of the Central and Peripheral Nervous Systems

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

Source

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). [Vasculitis Syndromes of the Central and Peripheral Nervous Systems Information Page.](#)

Vasculitis is inflammation of blood vessels, which includes the veins, arteries, and capillaries. It occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks a blood vessel. Vasculitis can also be caused by other immune system disease, an allergic reaction to medicines or toxins, and by certain blood cancers that trigger an immune system reaction. The resulting reduced blood flow can permanently damage the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nervous system, and other organs and tissue. Some forms of vasculitis affect a particular organ, while others may affect many organs at the same time. Symptoms include headaches (especially a headache that doesn't go away), fever, weight loss, confusion or forgetfulness leading to dementia, swelling of the brain, pain, vision problems, trouble speaking or understanding, muscle weakness and paralysis, and seizures. Some of the better understood vasculitis syndromes are temporal arteritis (also called giant cell arteritis or cranial arteritis--a chronic inflammatory disorder of large blood vessels) and Takayasu's disease, which affects larger aortas and may cause stroke.