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Sydenham Chorea

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

Source

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

Sydenham chorea (SC) is a neurological disorder of childhood resulting from infection via *Group A beta-hemolytic streptococcus* (GABHS), the bacterium that causes rheumatic fever. SC is characterized by rapid, irregular, and aimless involuntary movements of the arms and legs, trunk, and facial muscles. It affects girls more often than boys and typically occurs between 5 and 15 years of age. Some children will have a sore throat several weeks before the symptoms begin, but the disorder can also strike up to 6 months after the fever or infection has cleared. Symptoms can appear gradually or all at once, and also may include uncoordinated movements, muscular weakness, stumbling and falling, slurred speech, difficulty concentrating and writing, and emotional instability. The symptoms of SC can vary from a halting gait and slight grimacing to involuntary movements that are frequent and severe enough to be incapacitating. The random, writhing movements of chorea are caused by an auto-immune reaction to the bacterium that interferes with the normal function of a part of the brain (the basal ganglia) that controls motor movements. Due to better sanitary conditions and the use of antibiotics to treat streptococcal infections, rheumatic fever, and consequently SC, are rare in North America and Europe. The disease can still be found in developing nations.