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# Tabes Dorsalis

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

## Source

*National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). [Tabes Dorsalis Information Page.](#)*

Tabes dorsalis is a slow degeneration of the nerve cells and nerve fibers that carry sensory information to the brain. The degenerating nerves are in the dorsal columns of the spinal cord (the portion closest to the back of the body) and carry information that help maintain a person's sense of position. Tabes dorsalis is the result of an untreated syphilis infection. Symptoms may not appear for some decades after the initial infection and include weakness, diminished reflexes, unsteady gait, progressive degeneration of the joints, loss of coordination, episodes of intense pain and disturbed sensation, personality changes, dementia, deafness, visual impairment, and impaired response to light. The disease is more frequent in males than in females. Onset is commonly during mid-life. The incidence of tabes dorsalis is rising, in part due to co-associated HIV infection.