

Cushing's Syndrome

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Cushing's Syndrome

Cushing's Syndrome is caused by your body being exposed to high levels of cortisol for a long period of time. This disease is also known as hypercortisolism and it can be caused by using an oral corticosteroid medication or by your body producing too much cortisol. Cortisol affects all tissues and organs in the body. This disease is known to effect more women than men.

The signs of Cushing's Syndrome include thinning and fragile skin, pink and purple stretch marks, weight gain, and slow healing of cuts. Symptoms of this disease found in women include thick body and facial hair, and irregular menstrual periods. Symptoms Cushing's Syndrome found in men include decreased fertility, and erectile dysfunction. The signs and symptoms that occur can be different depending on the amount of cortisol that is being released into the body.

Cushing's Syndrome affects the endocrine system. The endocrine system includes the pituitary gland, thyroid gland, parathyroid glands, adrenal glands, pancreas, ovaries in females and testicles in males. The pituitary gland produces too much Adrenocorticotrophic Hormone(ACTH) and ACTH stimulates production of and release of cortisol which is a stress hormone. Too much of ACTH causes adrenal glands to make too much cortisol. Cortisol gets released during stressful situations so it is important to find something that works for you to relieve stress. Cortisol is important in controlling your blood pressure and metabolism and has the ability to affect almost every area in the body. Cortisol throughout the body is kept balanced by a system involving the hypothalamus, pituitary gland, and adrenal glands. The hormones that are produced by one gland can directly affect the production of other glands. These glands include adrenal glands, pituitary glands, thyroid glands, parathyroid glands,

pancreas, ovaries and testicles. The body systems that are directly affected by gland production include the digestive system as well as endocrine system.

Medical departments involved in the treatment of this disease include Neurosurgery, Endocrinology, and Oncology. Medical specialists that treat this disease include a Neurosurgeon, Endocrine surgeon, and Endocrinologists. The endocrinology department deals with pituitary-gonad-adrenal disorders. The oncology department deals with cancer treatment and education.

Diagnostic tests that are utilized to treat Cushing's Syndrome include urine screenings, blood tests, CT or MRI scan, and a saliva test. Urine and blood tests measure the amount of hormones in your urine and blood to show if the body is producing excessive amounts of cortisol. CT or MRI scans can provide you doctor with images of the pituitary and adrenal glands that will allow them to detect abnormalities. Saliva tests include a sample of saliva taken at night for doctors to test and see if cortisol levels are high. In people without this disease, levels of cortisol can drop significantly in the evening.

Treatments of this disease are to lower the high levels of cortisol found in the body. Treatment of Cushing's Syndrome can be different depending on what the cause was. Treatments include surgery, radiation therapy, reducing the usage of corticosteroid medications and prescribing other medications. Surgery can be performed if the disease is caused by a tumor and could include complete surgical removal. Radiation therapy is used when the surgeon is not able to totally remove a pituitary hormone. This can also be used if the patient is not suitable to undergo surgery. Reducing the usage of corticosteroid medications can keep the signs and symptoms of this disease under control while also being affective in treating the condition that requires the usage of corticosteroids. Medications that can be prescribed to treat over production of Cushing's Syndrome include Ketoconazole, Mitotane, and Metyrapone.

The prognosis of Cushing's Syndrome depends on the cause of the disease. Most cases are able to be cured although some tumors can recur. Most patients show significant improvement when being treated for this disease. It may be harder for some patients to recover from this disease due to what the cause of Cushing's Syndrome was. Depending on the cause of the disease, determines whether the patient will be affected for life or will recover. Lifelong problems that occur with this disease include tumors. Although some tumors can be removed they have a chance of reoccurring.

References

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