

# What Is Sjögren's Syndrome?



Sjögren's Syndrome is a chronic inflammatory autoimmune condition. This means the immune system attacks healthy tissues and organs. This includes the moisture-producing glands of the body including the salivary and tear glands causing abnormal dryness of the mouth, eyes and/or other tissues.

It can also affect the joints, muscles, nerves and other organs.

## Who Gets Sjögren's Syndrome?

Women aged between 40 and 60 are most likely to have the condition. However, the reasons for developing this condition are not clear.

Genetics may be a factor, and triggers may include:

- Viral infections
- Stress
- Hormonal changes



## What Are The Symptoms?

- Fatigue
- Painful, swollen joints
- Fever
- Raynaud's phenomenon - cold fingers that turn blue
- Swollen salivary glands
- Dry nose, throat, eyes, mouth, vagina, skin



## How Is Sjögren's Syndrome Diagnosed?

- Symptoms
- Physical examination
- A range of tests
- About half of those diagnosed with Sjögren's Syndrome have other rheumatic conditions such as Rheumatoid Arthritis, Lupus (SLE) or Scleroderma



## Medical Management:

There is no cure for Sjögren's Syndrome. Common symptoms can often be treated with specific medications. Treatment will usually be to manage the symptoms of dry mouth and eyes, such as eye drops and drugs that stimulate the salivary glands. Immune-suppressing drugs may be used for those with complications affecting other parts of the body.

## How Can I Help Myself?

Lifestyle management is important to manage symptoms and support your wellbeing:

- Look after your eyes with regular visits to an optometrist or ophthalmologist
- Regular use of artificial tears and lubricating ointments for the eyes to manage dryness
- Look after your mouth - drinking water and/or use of artificial saliva, mouth rinses or lozenges to relieve mouth dryness. Practice good dental hygiene. Regular visits to the dentist
- Exercise/physical activity to keep your muscles strong and your joints moving
- Avoid drying conditions - drafts from heaters, air conditioners, dusty/windy weather
- Healthy eating
- Balance of activity and rest
- Stress management

## For more information:



[arthritis.org.nz](http://arthritis.org.nz)



[facebook.com/  
ArthritisNewZealand/](https://facebook.com/ArthritisNewZealand/)



[instagram.com/  
arthritis\\_new\\_zealand/](https://instagram.com/arthritis_new_zealand/)



[youtube.com/channel/  
UCGrg2ml4fUVpJoFRXDg7sCg](https://youtube.com/channel/UCGrg2ml4fUVpJoFRXDg7sCg)

**Phone: 0800 663 463**  
**Email: [info@arthritis.org.nz](mailto:info@arthritis.org.nz)**



Arthritis NZ  
Matepona  
Aotearoa