Ataxia Encyclopedia Article

Ataxia

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Ataxia

Lack of coordination in the muscles.

Ataxia, an extreme lack of coordination of the muscles, is a symptom of damage to the central nervous system. People with ataxia typically stand with feet planted far apart, and sway while standing, struggling to maintain balance. Jerky eye and head movements are also commonly observed with ataxia. Ataxia may result from a number of causes, including damage to or diseases of the spinal cord or the cerebellum, a part of the brain; tumor on the spinal cord or in the cerebellum; infection affecting the central nervous system; response to **poison** or other environmental factor that causes the central nervous system to stop functioning normally or to degenerate; disease that causes degeneration of the central nervous system, such as multiple sclerosis; or hereditary factors. Hereditary ataxia conditions are rare, and include Friedreich's ataxia, which usually appears between the ages of five and twenty. Friedreich's ataxia is a disabling condition that often causes premature death.

For Further Study

Organizations

Friedreich's Ataxia Group in America (FAGA)
Address: P.O. Box 11116
Oakland, CA 94611
(Organization concerned with Friedreich's ataxia, an extremely rare inherited form of ataxia involving loss of
muscle control, usually of the legs.)

National Ataxia Foundation (NAF)
Address: 600 Twelve Oaks Center
15500 Wayzata Boulevard
Wayzata, MN 55391
(Publishes *Hereditary Ataxia: The Facts;* a newsletter,
Generations; and *Hereditary Ataxia: A Guidebook for Managing Speech and Swallowing Problems.)*

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)
Address: 9000 Rockville Pike
Building 31, Room 8A06
Bethesda, MD 20892