



## Huntington's Disease

Huntington's disease is inherited and causes nerve cells, called neurons, in the brain to deteriorate. People who are born with this defective gene usually don't show signs of the disease until middle age. The most common form of this disease is adult-onset Huntington's disease which someone usually develops symptoms in their mid 30s and 40s. A second form is early-onset and is less common. It begins in childhood or adolescence. Symptoms may resemble those of Parkinson's disease with rigidity, slow movements, and tremors.

## Causes and Risk Factors

Huntington is an inherited disease. Each child of an affected parent has a 50-50 chance of inheriting the Huntington gene. If a child does not inherit the gene, he /she will not develop the disease and cannot pass it to future generations. A person who inherits the gene will sooner or later develop the disease. Whether one child inherits the gene has no bearing on whether others will or will not inherit the gene.



## Warning Signs

Early signs may include clumsiness, uncontrolled movements, loss of intellectual faculties and coordination problems.

## Stages of Decline

As the disease progresses the ability to walk, talk and swallow are affected. Some will no longer be able to recognize family members and may not be able to express emotions.

## Confirmation

A blood test can tell you if you have the Huntington gene and will develop the disease.

## Treatment

There is no cure. Medicines can help manage some of the symptoms, but cannot slow down or stop the disease. At this time, there is no way to stop or reverse the course of HD. There are a number of medications to help control emotional and



movement problems associated with HD. Most drugs used to treat the symptoms of HD have side effects such as fatigue, restlessness, or hyperexcitability.

## Prevention

It is extremely important for people with HD to maintain physical fitness as much as possible. Individuals who exercise and keep active tend to do better than those who do not.

### Information Sources:

National Library of Medicine  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov>

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke  
<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/>

Huntington's Disease Society of America  
<http://www.hdsa.org/>

Huntington's Disease: Hope Through Research <<< *may want to link to this one*  
[http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/huntington/detail\\_huntington.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/huntington/detail_huntington.htm)