

What is sarcoidosis?

Sarcoidosis is a condition where lumps called granulomas develop at different sites within the body. Granulomas are made up of clusters of cells involved in inflammation. If many granulomas form in an organ, they can prevent that organ from working properly.

Who develops sarcoidosis?

About 1 in 10,000 people in the UK have sarcoidosis. It can occur at any age, but most commonly affects adults in their 30s or 40s.

What causes sarcoidosis?

So far, a single factor causing sarcoidosis has not been identified. It probably involves a precise combination of genetic and environmental factors.

The outlook

Sarcoidosis gets better without treatment in around 60% of patients. In the minority of patients that develop a more serious form of the disease, more aggressive and prolonged treatment can be required. A much smaller proportion of patients present with life-threatening symptoms, particularly in those with pulmonary fibrosis, heart or neurological involvement.

What parts of the body are affected?

Sarcoidosis can affect many different parts of the body. It often affects the lungs but can also affect the skin, eyes, joints, nervous system, heart and other parts of the body.



Symptoms of sarcoidosis

The symptoms of sarcoidosis depend on which part of the body is affected. They can include:

- cough
 - feeling breathless
 - red or painful eyes
 - swollen glands
 - skin rashes
 - pain in joints, muscles or bones
 - numbness or weakness of the face, arms, or legs
 - fatigue
 - weight loss
 - fevers and night sweats
- Sometimes, the symptoms of sarcoidosis start suddenly and don't last long. In other patients, the symptoms may develop gradually and last for many years. Some people don't have any symptoms at all.

How is sarcoidosis diagnosed?

There is no single or specific test to diagnose sarcoidosis. A detailed history and examination by your doctor is the most important first step in diagnosing sarcoidosis. They will determine which parts of your body may be affected. Investigations may include blood tests, lung tests, scans and biopsies.

Sarcoidosis treatment

There is currently no known cure for sarcoidosis. Treatment is often necessary for patients whose sarcoidosis is causing severe symptoms or is preventing the affected organ(s) from functioning normally. Sometimes simple painkillers (paracetamol or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen) may help to ease the symptoms. The drugs used to treat sarcoidosis do so by reducing inflammation in the body. These are known as immunosuppressants. The most commonly used drugs are corticosteroids. Other immunosuppressants may be used, either alone or in combination, to help reduce the steroid dose. These medications include methotrexate, azathioprine and mycophenolate.

