



What is Huntington's disease?

Huntington's disease (HD) is a genetic disorder that affects the brain, causing unsteady, uncontrollable movements of the hands, feet and face. These abnormal movements may eventually affect activities such as walking, talking and swallowing.

Psychiatric and behavioral problems are also common and may be harder to manage than the involuntary movements themselves.

An estimated one person in 10,000, including nearly 30,000 people in the United States, has Huntington's disease.

Who is at risk for Huntington's disease?

A person will get HD if he or she inherits the abnormal HD gene from a parent. A child whose parent has the HD mutation has a 50 percent chance of inheriting the gene; anyone who inherits the gene will ultimately develop HD symptoms. The average age of onset is 40, although it varies, and may be earlier than in the prior generation. Lifespan also varies, depending in part on the severity of a given patient's condition.

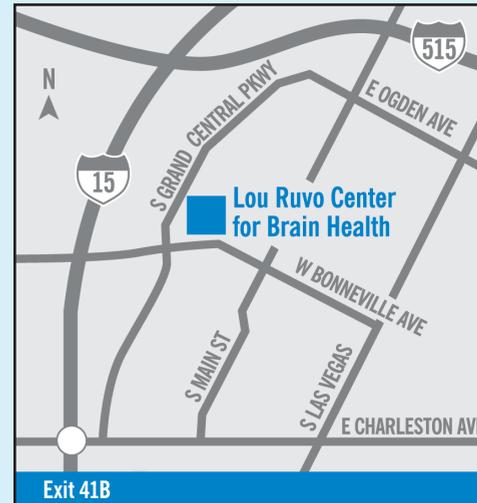
What are the symptoms of Huntington's disease?

Huntington's disease affects thinking, behavior and movement. One of the first physical symptoms is involuntary, random and abrupt muscle movements called chorea.

Early behavioral signs of HD include increased irritability, mood swings, obsessional thinking, depression and anger. Over time, patients with HD may develop problems with memory, multitasking and attention. Sometimes, these mental changes precede physical signs for years.

Physical problems may be minor at first — for example, clumsiness or losing balance — but they tend to worsen over time. Chorea can make speaking, eating and walking more difficult, and may also affect the person's ability to perform daily functions, such as driving. Individuals with HD are also at risk for falls. They may develop bradykinesia or akinesia, which makes their movements and speech slower and less animated. Speech and swallowing difficulties often present later in the course of the disease.

Contact Us



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To learn more about our center, please visit
clevelandclinic.org/brainhealth

About Us

Cleveland Clinic

Cleveland Clinic is a nonprofit multispecialty academic medical center that integrates clinical and hospital care with research and education. Founded in 1921, Cleveland Clinic has pioneered many medical breakthroughs, including coronary artery bypass surgery and the first face transplant in the United States. *U.S. News & World Report* consistently names Cleveland Clinic as one of the nation's best hospitals in its annual "America's Best Hospitals" survey. Among Cleveland Clinic's 52,000 employees are more than 3,600 full-time salaried physicians and researchers and 14,000 nurses, representing 140 medical specialties and subspecialties. Cleveland Clinic's health system includes a 165-acre main campus near downtown Cleveland, 11 regional hospitals, more than 150 northern Ohio outpatient locations — including 18 full-service family health centers and three health and wellness centers — and locations in Weston, Fla.; Las Vegas, Nev.; Toronto, Canada; Abu Dhabi, UAE; and London, England. In 2017, there were 7.6 million outpatient visits, 229,000 hospital admissions and 207,000 surgical cases throughout Cleveland Clinic's health system. Patients came for treatment from every state and 185 countries. Visit us at clevelandclinic.org.

Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health

Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health provides expert diagnosis and treatment for individuals and families living with Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Huntington's diseases; multiple sclerosis; frontotemporal dementia and related disorders; and multiple system atrophy. The center offers a continuum of care with no-cost opportunities for the community to participate in education and research, including disease prevention studies and clinical trials of promising new medications. An integrated entity, Keep Memory Alive, raises funds exclusively in support of the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Huntington's Disease





How is Huntington's disease treated?

We have no cure for Huntington's disease, although research is ongoing. Symptomatic treatments are designed to reduce behavioral abnormalities and chorea, address nutritional needs and swallowing disorders, minimize harm and provide comfort.

Huntington's Disease Comprehensive Clinic: a Coordinated Approach for Evaluation and Treatment

At Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, our multidisciplinary Huntington's disease clinic provides the full spectrum of care for patients and their families. Team members span:

- Neurology, representing both movement and cognitive disorders
- Psychiatry
- Physical therapy
- Social work

These professionals address issues ranging from chorea and depression to practical concerns such as fall risk, gait imbalance and safety in the home. Genetic testing and genetic counseling also are available, as are neuropsychology, occupational therapy and speech therapy.

Collectively, we have the varied and targeted expertise to address HD from multiple approaches. We work collaboratively with patients and their families to attend to their physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral needs.

Convenient Scheduling

Our goal is to schedule visits with all relevant team members within the same half-day for the optimal convenience of our patients and their caregivers.

What can caregivers do to help people with Huntington's disease?

Caregivers can assist the patient with daily activities, bearing in mind that keeping the patient's environment as "normal" as possible may be helpful.

Exercise has physical and mental benefits, so the person with HD should try to maintain some regular physical activity, if possible.

Proper nutrition and hydration are very important because the person with HD may have trouble maintaining sufficient caloric or fluid intake. For patients with HD who have difficulty swallowing or who choke, a swallowing evaluation can guide caregivers on how best to prepare foods.

Our Patient and Family Services Programs Can Help

The Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health's social services offerings are designed to reduce stress by augmenting knowledge, coping skills and a sense of well-being among patients, family members and caregivers managing an array of new and ongoing challenges. We care not only for patients, but for their entire support system. We offer a monthly support group for individuals who are gene-positive or are at risk, and for adult family members and caregivers.

Community Resources

We support the Las Vegas chapter of the Huntington's Disease Society of America (HDSA) through collaboration and sponsorship. The Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health has been a proud sponsor of the annual HD Walk, with a focus on promoting awareness and education for HD patients and families.

Developing New Treatments Through Research

Opportunities are available for participation in clinical research trials — the only route to conquering this dread disease.

As a part of the Huntington Study Group, we are a potential site for therapeutic trials in HD designed both to help treat symptoms of the disease and to find a cure.

Additionally, we're proud to be a part of ENROLL-HD, a global longitudinal, observational study of HD aimed at collecting a common set of data from all participants across all sites around the world to learn more about the disease, improve clinical care and find new treatments. The study is open to individuals with HD and their family members. Those interested in participating should ask their Cleveland Clinic provider if they qualify for the study. They may also ask to speak with our research coordinator for ENROLL-HD.

