



What is Williams Syndrome?

Williams syndrome is a genetic condition that occurs in both males and females of all ethnic and racial backgrounds. It affects physical features, health, learning, and behavior. Williams syndrome occurs in about 1 in 7,500 people.

Michigan Resources & Support

Children's Special Health Care Services

Family Phone Line
Toll-free: 1-800-359-3722
www.michigan.gov/cshcs

Early On® Michigan

Toll-free: 1-800-EARLY ON
www.1800earlyon.org

Michigan Birth Defects Program

Nurse Follow-up Coordinator
Toll-free: 1-866-852-1247
E-mail: BDRfollowup@michigan.gov

Michigan Genetics Connection

www.migeneticsconnection.org

National Resources & Support

Williams Syndrome Association

Toll-free: 1-800-806-1871
www.williams-syndrome.org

Williams Syndrome Foundation

Phone: 949-824-7259
www.wsf.org

Family Village

www.familyvillage.wisc.edu

GeneReviews

www.geneclinics.org/profiles/williams

Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center

Toll-free: 1-888-205-2311
E-mail: GARDinfo@nih.gov

Genetics Home Reference

www.ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition=williamsyndrome

How may Williams syndrome affect my child?

Learning: Young children often have developmental delays. Older children and adults may have learning disabilities or mild mental impairment. They may also show a great interest or ability in music, and have specific intellectual strengths.

Behavior: Infants may have problems sleeping and be overly sensitive to sound. Children with Williams syndrome often have attention deficit disorder and an “overly-friendly” personality.

Physical: Low birth weight and poor weight gain are common. People with Williams syndrome often have certain

facial features such as a wide mouth, full lips, small teeth, and puffiness around the eyes. The voice may sound hoarse. Soft skin and loose joints are common.

Medical: Feeding problems are common in infants and young children. High calcium levels (hypercalcemia) may occur. This can cause irritability, vomiting, constipation and muscle cramps. Heart and blood vessel disease may develop. A narrowing of the main blood vessel leading from the heart, called supravalvular aortic stenosis, is a frequent finding. Eye problems may also occur.

How does Williams syndrome occur?

Williams syndrome is caused by a change in the #7 chromosome. A very small piece of the chromosome is missing (deleted), including some of the genes within it. The child with Williams syndrome is usually the first and only family member affected. Sometimes the deleted chromosome is passed down from a parent. A person with Williams syndrome has a 1 in 2 (50%) chance of passing the trait on to each of his or her children. Genetic counseling is recommended for parents to learn about the genetic cause of Williams syndrome in their family and possible risks for other children.

How is Williams syndrome treated?

Williams syndrome cannot be cured, but many symptoms can be treated. Infants and toddlers (birth to 3 years) should be connected with *Early On*® Michigan as soon as possible. When there are concerns about learning, speech, or behavior in a child over 3 years of age, a referral for special education services should be made. Calcium levels should be checked, and the child should be monitored for heart problems as well as vision or hearing problems. Heart surgery or other treatments may be needed for health problems as they arise. Children with Williams syndrome and their families benefit from having a primary care physician who helps to coordinate their care with medical specialists and community-based services.

For more information, call Michigan's Genetics & Birth Defects Program toll-free at 1-866-852-1247 or e-mail Genetics@michigan.gov

Supported in part by project # 6 H91MC00215-04-01 as a Special Project of Regional and National Significance (SPRANS), Title V (as amended), Social Security Act, administered by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, United States Department of Health and Human Services.