



Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)

Clinical Symptoms

Individuals with GBS can experience varying degrees of weakness or tingling sensations in the legs which can spread symmetrically to arms and upper body (ascending weakness). These symptoms can increase in intensity until certain muscles cannot be used at all and, when severe, the person is almost totally paralyzed. In these cases the disorder is life threatening - potentially interfering with breathing and, at times, with blood pressure or heart rate - and is considered a medical emergency. Such an individual is often put on a ventilator to assist with breathing and is watched closely for problems such as an abnormal heart beat, infections, blood clots, and high or low blood pressure.

After the first clinical manifestations of the disease, the symptoms can progress rapidly, over the course of hours, days, or weeks. Most people reach the stage of greatest weakness within the first 2 weeks after symptoms appear, and by the third week of the illness 90 percent of all patients are at their weakest. Most individuals, however, have good recovery from even the most severe cases of GBS although some continue to have a certain degree of weakness.

Risk Factors

- Usually GBS occurs a few days or weeks after the patient has had symptoms of a respiratory or gastrointestinal viral infection.
 - Infection with *Campylobacter jejuni* is one of the most common risk factors for GBS
 - People also can develop GBS after having the flu or other infections (such as cytomegalovirus and Epstein Barr virus).
 - GBS may be linked to arboviruses such as Zika virus.
- Occasionally surgery will trigger the syndrome.
- On very rare occasions, they may develop GBS in the days or weeks after getting a vaccination.

Reporting Cases of GBS

In the State of Michigan, cases are required to be reported to local and state health departments per the Michigan Public Health Code. According to the Reportable Conditions guidelines, a case of GBS should be reported within three days of diagnosis.

Cases of GBS that may coincide with vaccination should be reported to the CDC/FDA Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS).

Case definition:

Confirmed: clinically compatible illness diagnosed by a physician as Guillain-Barré syndrome

Probable: clinically compatible illness that cannot be ruled out as Guillain-Barré syndrome

For assistance on reporting and case classification, contact your [regional epidemiologist](#).

Resources:

- http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/gbs/detail_gbs.htm
- <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/concerns/guillain-barre-syndrome.html>
- <https://vaers.hhs.gov/>