



HELPFUL TERMS

Sjögren's disease affects everyone differently. Here are some key words and terms related to the condition and its treatment.

A

ANA (antinuclear antibody) → a type of antibody often found in people with autoimmune diseases; commonly tested when diagnosing Sjögren's disease.

antibody → a protein produced by the immune system that identifies and helps remove foreign substances; can mistakenly target healthy tissue in autoimmune diseases.

artificial tears → eye drops used to relieve dryness and irritation.

autoimmune disease → a condition in which the immune system mistakenly attacks the body's own tissues.

B

B cell → a type of white blood cell involved in the immune response that is overactive in Sjögren's disease.

BAFF (B-cell activating factor) → a protein that promotes the survival and activity of B cells and is thought to play a role in causing the symptoms of Sjögren's disease.

biologic therapy → a treatment made from living organisms that targets specific parts of the immune system, sometimes used in autoimmune diseases.

brain fog → cognitive impairment that can include memory lapses, difficulty concentrating, and confusion.

C

chronic → describes a condition that lasts a long time or constantly recurs.

comorbidity → the presence of 1 or more additional diseases or disorders occurring with Sjögren's disease, such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis.

D

disease activity → how much a disease is affecting you throughout your body. It looks at the symptoms you can see and feel, along with the underlying impact you may not notice (such as changes in your lab results). Understanding disease activity can help you better manage your Sjögren's disease.

dry eye → a common symptom of Sjögren's disease caused by reduced tear production or poor tear quality.

dry mouth (xerostomia) → a common symptom of Sjögren's disease due to reduced saliva production, which can affect speaking, eating, and dental health.

dysautonomia → a dysfunction of the autonomic nervous system that can cause fainting, dizziness, sweating, heart rate issues, and heat intolerance.

E

ESSDAI (EULAR Sjögren's syndrome disease activity index) → a scoring system used to see how active the disease is in different body areas (like skin, glands, lungs, joints). More severe problems in certain areas give a higher total score. Your doctor may not talk about it, because it is used mostly in clinical trials.

EULAR (European Alliance of Associations for Rheumatology) → a nonprofit organization that represents people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs), health professionals in rheumatology (HPR), rheumatologists, researchers, and scientific societies in the field of rheumatology throughout the European nations.

extraglandular symptoms → symptoms that affect other parts of the body beyond the glands, such as joints, lungs, kidneys, and nerves.

fatigue → a persistent and profound tiredness that can affect quality of life and your ability to do things.

F **fibromyalgia** → a chronic condition that causes widespread pain and fatigue; may coexist with Sjögren's disease or be confused with it.

flares → periods of time when symptoms worsen significantly that can last days or even months.

G **glandular symptoms** → symptoms related to the dysfunction of tear and salivary glands, such as dry eyes and dry mouth.

immune system → the body's defense network made up of cells, tissues, and organs that protect against infection and disease.

I **inflammation** → a protective response by the immune system to injury, infection, or harmful triggers. In Sjögren's disease, inflammation becomes chronic and misdirected. The immune system mistakenly attacks healthy tissues such as the tear and saliva glands and other organs, which can lead to symptoms such as dryness, pain, swelling, and fatigue, and can affect multiple parts of the body over time.

interstitial lung disease → a group of lung disorders that cause inflammation and scarring of the lungs, making it difficult to breathe.

L **lymphocyte** → a type of white blood cell that plays a central role in the immune response and is involved in Sjögren's disease.

lymphoma → a type of cancer that begins in immune cells; people with Sjögren's disease have a slightly increased risk of developing lymphoma.

N **neurological symptoms** → signs that may indicate a problem with the nervous system, which includes the brain, spinal cord, and the nerves. Symptoms can include tingling, numbness, nerve pain, burning, or electric shock-like symptoms.

neuropathy → nerve damage that can cause numbness, tingling, or burning in the hands and feet, often associated with Sjögren's disease.

O **organ system** → a group of organs that works together to perform specific functions in the body.

over the counter (OTC) → medications you can buy without a prescription (such as artificial tears or lozenges).

P **progression** → developing new symptoms or your existing ones getting worse over time.

Raynaud's phenomenon → a condition where fingers or toes turn white or blue in response to cold or stress; sometimes seen in people with Sjögren's disease.

R **rheumatoid factor (RF)** → an antibody often tested in autoimmune workups; test results may be positive for RF in Sjögren's disease.

rheumatologist → a doctor (or another health care provider such as a nurse practitioner) who specializes in diagnosing and treating autoimmune and inflammatory diseases, such as Sjögren's disease.

salivary glands → glands that produce saliva; often affected by the immune system in Sjögren's disease.

Schirmer's test → a diagnostic test that measures tear production to assess dryness in the eyes.

sicca → a medical term used to describe dryness, especially of the eyes and mouth.

S **Sjögren's disease** → a chronic, systemic autoimmune disease that can affect many different parts of your body, including your glands and organs.

SJÖUT (SHOUT) → sharing your story about how Sjögren's disease is more than just dryness. It can help others see the full story of Sjögren's disease, connect the dots of their own symptoms, and find their voice.

systemic → a term used to describe a condition that affects the entire body, instead of just 1 part or organ.

W **white blood cell** → a type of cell in the immune system that helps protect the body from infections and disease.