

Long QT syndrome

Long QT syndrome is a relatively common cause of sudden death in children and young adults. Long QT syndrome is diagnosed by electrocardiograph (ECG). Fainting can be a symptom of Long QT syndrome and is sometimes mistaken for a seizure. About one-third of people who have Long QT syndrome do not have any symptoms.

Warning signs of long QT syndrome

You should be investigated for Long QT syndrome if:

- You faint for no apparent reason
- You faint during or shortly after exercise or emotional excitement
- There is a family history of unexplained fainting or sudden death in your family.

An inherited condition

There are two types of inherited Long QT syndrome:

- **Romano-Ward type** - this is being recognised with increasing frequency. Researchers have found six genes that cause Long QT syndrome. When all the genes have been found, genetic testing for the syndrome will be possible.
- **Jervell, Lange-Nielson type** - this form is rare and also causes deafness.

Acquired Long QT syndrome

Long QT syndrome can also be acquired by taking certain over-the-counter medications and some prescribed medications. If you have Long QT syndrome, always tell your doctor before they give you a prescription. There is an updated list of medications to avoid: Center for Education and Research on Therapeutics.

Exercise, noise or stress can trigger an event

An event can be triggered by:

- Exercise
- Being startled by a loud noise, such as a horn, ringing telephone or alarm clock
- Exams, test or other stressful situations
- Anger or crying.

Treatment for Long QT syndrome

Treatment includes:

- **Medications** - beta blockers are effective for 90 per cent of people with Long QT syndrome.
- **Pacemaker** - you may need a pacemaker or defibrillator as well as beta blocker medication.

Where to get help

- Your doctor should refer you to a knowledgeable cardiologist
- Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Cardiology Department
- SADS (Sudden Arrhythmic Death Syndrome) Australia

Things to remember

- If you are diagnosed with Long QT syndrome your entire family should be tested including extended relatives.
- Long QT syndrome is usually inherited although it can be acquired after taking certain medications.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Genetic Health Services Victoria

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