

Mayo Clinic Minute: How vasculitis affects the body

VIDEO	AUDIO
	Vasculitis is a group of conditions — all related to inflammation of blood vessels.
Kenneth Warrington, M.D. Rheumatology Mayo Clinic	"White blood cells, which normally are circulating in the body and protect us from infection, become misdirected. And they actually invade and target the walls of blood vessels."
	The exact cause of vasculitis isn't fully understood, but, in some cases, it might be genetic. It also could be triggered by an infection, cancer, immune disorder or a reaction to certain medications.
	The inflammation causes blood vessels to thicken and restrict blood flow, damaging organs and tissue.
	"People may lose vision, there may be lack of blood supply to an extremity, or there could be organ failure, like kidney or respiratory failure."
	Initially, the symptoms can be vague.
	"Folks may just feel unwell. They may have a poor appetite. They may start losing weight."
	But as it progresses, more parts of the body will have symptoms.
	"If there are multiple organs that are affected simultaneously, that's when we would suspect vasculitis."
	Treatment is usually medications that target the immune system and reduce inflammation. Corticosteroids, such as prednisone, are the most common drugs prescribed.
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Jason Howland.