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**Antiphospholipid Syndrome (APLS)**

**Also known as:** APLS, APS

**What is APLS?**

When your body is infected with a virus or a bacteria, the immune system forms special proteins called "antibodies" to attack the infecting bug. Sometimes, the body forms antibodies that attack itself instead of an infective agent. In persons with APLS, the immune system produces an antibody known as antiphospholipid antibody (APL). This antibody attacks certain "good" body fats called lipids. If the level of APL in the bloodstream is high, problems can occur.

APLS can cause blood clots to form in blood vessels (called thrombosis), which can cause problems like stroke, heart attack, pulmonary embolism (a blood clot in the lung) or gangrene of the hands or feet. APLS can cause miscarriages because of blood clots in the placenta. People with APLS often have a decrease in the number of blood platelets.

Approximately one-third of people with APLS have problems with heart valves. Lesions may form on the valve, or the valve tissue may thicken. This can affect the valve's ability to open and close properly, which can cause regurgitation.

APLS can be caused by other diseases like Lupus erythematosus. It can also occur by itself.

**How is APLS diagnosed?**

The doctor may request tests that identify the presence of antiphospholipid antibodies in the blood.

**How is APLS treated?**

Your doctor may prescribe medications called "anticoagulants" to help prevent blood clots from forming.

Some experimental treatments aimed at suppressing the antiphospholipid antibodies looks promising, but more research is needed.