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POLYARTERITIS NODOSA

What is polyarteritis nodosa?

Polyarteritis nodosa (also known as periarteritis nodosa) is a disease that affects small and medium-sized arteries. The disease causes these arteries to become swollen. The disease generally strikes adults only. As a result of the damage to the arteries in this disease, the tissues of the body that are supplied by those arteries are also damaged. Damage to organ tissues of the heart, kidneys, nervous system and skin can cause secondary problems.

What causes polyarteritis nodosa?

The cause of the disease is unknown.

What are the symptoms of polyarteritis nodosa?

General symptoms include fever, fatigue, weakness, loss of appetite, muscle aches, joint aches and weight loss.

Symptoms from organ systems that are affected by the disease are common, and can include:

SKIN:	skin rashes, swelling, lumps and ulceration
NERVOUS SYSTEM:	numbness, pain, burning, weakness, sensory changes, strokes, seizures
KIDNEYS:	renal failure
HEART:	heart attack, heart failure, pericarditis (inflammation of the sac around the heart)

How is polyarteritis nodosa diagnosed?

There are no specific diagnostic tests or imaging methods that are used to diagnose polyarteritis nodosa. Your doctor will take your history and perform a physical exam. He/she may take blood samples for laboratory tests.

How is polyarteritis nodosa treated?

The disease is typically treated by medications, including corticosteroids and cyclophosphamide (a drug used to treat cancer and rheumatoid disorders)