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# Sjogren's Syndrome

Patient name: \_\_\_\_\_ Admission: \_\_\_\_\_

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**I. The client/caregiver can describe Sjogren's syndrome.**

- A. The white blood cells incorrectly produce antibodies which attack, inflame, and damage moisture producing glands.
- B. Damage is most common to the tear and saliva glands.
- C. Risk factors
  - Greater for women
  - Greater over the age of 40 years
  - Higher for people who have rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, polymyositis, Raynaud's, and scleroderma or those who have family history of rheumatic disease
- D. The more serious form is called primary Sjogren's. Damage is done to the moisture-producing tissue in the skin, muscle, joints, thyroid, blood vessels, liver, or pancreas.

**II. The client/caregiver can list symptoms of Sjogren's syndrome.**

- A. Three or more month history of a dry or gritty eye sensation, blurred vision, or bright-light sensitivity.
- B. Chronic complaints of dry or "cotton" mouth often combined with thickened saliva that becomes sticky.
- C. Decreased saliva will
  1. Increase the risk of cavities
  2. Cause lips to crack and bleed
  3. Cause mouth sores and fungal infections
  4. Make taste and smell abilities fade
- D. Damaged moisture production in other areas can cause
  - Dry and itchy skin with rashes
  - Joint pain
  - Gastrointestinal problems
  - Heartburn
  - Weight loss
  - Thyroid problems
  - Lung and respiratory problems

**III. The client/caregiver can describe treatment for Sjogren's syndrome.**

- A. The goal is to moisturize and protect any problem areas.

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- B. Treatment for the mouth
  - Regular dental care
  - Sugar-free hard candy or gum
  - Good oral care using fluoride gel, floss, and rinses
  - Over-the-counter artificial saliva products
  - No smoking
  - Use of humidifiers in home
- C. Treatment for the eyes
  1. Avoid wind, sand, and smoke.
  2. Goggles can be used as protection.
  3. Artificial tears can be helpful.
- D. Treatment for skin
  - Moisturizing soaps
  - Oil-based ointments
  - Protection against sunlight
  - Vaginal lubricants
- E. Use medication only as directed by physician.
- F. Because various medical specialist and health providers are involved, coordinate and inform all care providers to maximize treatment.

**RESOURCES**

Sjogren's Syndrome Foundation  
[www.sjogrens.org](http://www.sjogrens.org)

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)  
[www.niams.nih.gov](http://www.niams.nih.gov)

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