Behçet's Disease
(Adamantiades)

Behçet's disease is a rare, chronic, lifelong disorder. It involves inflammation of blood vessels throughout the body.

CAUSES
The exact cause is unknown. It is believed that an autoimmune reaction may cause blood vessels to become inflamed. But it is not clear what triggers this reaction.

SYMPTOMS
Symptoms of Behçet's disease include:
- Returning (*recurrent*) genital ulcers and oral ulcers that resemble canker sores.
- Eye inflammation.

The disorder may also cause:
- Various types of skin sores (*lesions*).
- Arthritis.
- Bowel inflammation.
- Inflammation of the membranes of the brain and spinal cord (*meningitis*).

This disease generally begins when patients are in their 20's or 30's. But all age groups may be affected. Behçet's is a multi system disease. It may involve all organs and affect the central nervous system. This may cause:
- Memory loss.
- Impaired speech, balance, and movement.

TREATMENT
There is no cure for Behçet's disease. Treatment typically focuses on reducing discomfort and preventing serious complications. The effects of the disease may include blindness, stroke, swelling of the spinal cord, and intestinal complications. Corticosteroids and other medications that suppress the immune system may be given to treat inflammation.

Behçet's is a chronic disease. It recurs or keeps causing problems. But patients may have periods of time when symptoms go away temporarily (*remission*). How bad the disease gets is different from patient to patient. Some patients may live normal lives. Others may become blind or severely disabled.

RESEARCH BEING DONE
The U.S. government supports research on painful disorders such as Behçet's disease. This research is aimed at:
- Discovering the cause(s) of these disorders.
- Finding ways to treat, prevent, and, ultimately, cure them.

The information provided here was mostly developed by the National Eye Institute to help patients and their families in searching for general information about Behçet's disease. An eye care professional who has examined the patient's eyes and is familiar with his or her medical history is the best person to answer specific questions. Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
American Behçet's Disease Association
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1-800-723-4238
http://www.behcets.com

Information courtesy of the National Eye Institute and National Institutes of Health

Document Released: 12/08/2003 Document Re-Released: 09/26/2009
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