

# CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM VASCULITIS

## WHAT IS CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM?

Central nervous system (CNS) vasculitis is inflammation of blood vessel walls in the brain or spine. CNS vasculitis often occurs in the following situations:

- Accompanied by other autoimmune diseases such as systemic lupus erythematosus, and, rarely, rheumatoid arthritis
- Infection, such as viral or bacterial
- Systemic (affecting the whole body) vasculitic disorders (granulomatosis with polyangiitis (GPA), microscopic polyangiitis, Behçet's syndrome);

It can also occur without any associated systemic disorder. In this case, the vasculitis is only confined to the brain or the spinal cord and it is referred to as primary angiitis of the CNS (PACNS).

## SYMPTOMS

**Symptoms of CNS vasculitis can include the following:**

- Severe headaches that last a long time
- Strokes or transient ischemic attacks ("mini-strokes")
- Forgetfulness or confusion
- Weakness
- Problems with eyesight
- Seizures
- Sensation abnormalities

## CAUSES

How the vessels in the brain become inflamed is not entirely clear. In some vasculitic diseases, abnormal antibodies (autoantibodies) may attack vessel walls and cause inflammation and destruction of the vessel wall. Infection caused by a virus can also cause CNS vasculitis.