
Turner Syndrome

Public Education

Correspondence: Exon Publications, Brisbane, Australia; Email: books@exonpublications.com

Cite as: Turner Syndrome. Brisbane (AU): Exon Publications; 2024. Published on 02 Dec.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36255/turner-syndrome>

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Abstract

Turner Syndrome is a genetic condition that affects females, caused by the complete or partial loss of one X chromosome. This condition impacts various aspects of health, including growth, heart function, fertility, and development. This article provides a comprehensive guide to understanding Turner Syndrome, its causes, symptoms, and available treatments. It explores the genetic basis of the condition, including the role of the SHOX gene, and discusses diagnostic methods, management strategies, and living with the condition. Written in simple terms, this article is designed to educate patients, families, and caregivers, providing all the essential information needed to navigate life with Turner Syndrome.

Keywords: Amniocentesis; Chorionic villus sampling; Delayed puberty; Diagnosis of Turner Syndrome; Epidemiology of Turner Syndrome; Estrogen replacement

therapy; Genetics and Inheritance of Turner Syndrome; Growth hormone therapy; Humatrope; Living with Turner Syndrome; Monosomy X; Mosaic Turner Syndrome; Partial Turner Syndrome; Pathophysiology of Turner Syndrome; Prognosis of Turner Syndrome; Risk Factors and Causes of Turner Syndrome; Short stature; SHOX gene; Somatropin; Symptoms of Turner Syndrome; Treatment and Management of Turner Syndrome; Types of Turner Syndrome; What is Turner Syndrome

Introduction

Turner Syndrome is a genetic disorder that occurs in females and is characterized by the absence or abnormality of one X chromosome. This condition affects physical development, including height and reproductive health, and can also impact other organ systems. Although there is no cure for Turner Syndrome, early diagnosis and proper management can significantly improve quality of life. This article aims to provide a thorough and accessible understanding of Turner Syndrome for patients, families, and caregivers, covering every aspect of the condition from its causes to its treatment (1-3).

What is Turner Syndrome?

Turner Syndrome is a genetic condition that affects only females and occurs when one of the two X chromosomes is missing entirely or partially. Chromosomes are structures in cells that carry genetic information. Females typically have two X chromosomes, but in Turner Syndrome, one is either missing or altered. This affects various aspects of development, such as height, fertility, and heart health. The condition is named after Dr. Henry Turner, who first described it in 1938. Turner Syndrome is not inherited and usually occurs randomly during the formation of reproductive cells or early embryonic development.



Turner Syndrome is a genetic condition that affects females, caused by the partial or complete loss of one X chromosome, leading to features such as short stature, delayed puberty, and potential heart or kidney issues.

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Epidemiology of Turner Syndrome

Turner Syndrome is relatively rare, affecting approximately 1 in 2,500 live female births worldwide. It occurs across all ethnic and geographic groups. The condition is more common during pregnancy, but many affected pregnancies result in miscarriage, making it underrepresented in live births. Turner Syndrome is the most common chromosomal disorder affecting females, and increased awareness and advances in genetic testing have improved diagnosis rates over time.

Types of Turner Syndrome

Turner Syndrome is classified into several types based on the genetic makeup of the X chromosomes. Classic Turner Syndrome occurs when one X chromosome is completely missing in all cells, a condition known as monosomy X. Mosaic Turner Syndrome happens when some cells have the usual two X chromosomes, while others have only one X chromosome. Partial Turner Syndrome occurs when one X chromosome is incomplete or structurally altered. Understanding the type of Turner Syndrome helps guide diagnosis and treatment, as the symptoms and severity can vary widely.

Genetics and Inheritance of Turner Syndrome

Turner Syndrome is caused by a genetic abnormality involving the X chromosome, typically the complete or partial loss of one X chromosome. This condition is not inherited from parents but occurs as a random event during the formation of reproductive cells or early embryonic development. The SHOX gene, located on the X chromosome, plays a critical role in growth and bone development, and its absence or reduction contributes to the short stature and skeletal abnormalities seen in Turner Syndrome. Genetic testing can confirm the diagnosis and identify the specific chromosomal abnormalities involved.

Risk Factors and Causes of Turner Syndrome

Turner Syndrome is not caused by environmental or lifestyle factors. The primary cause is a random genetic error that results in the complete or partial absence of one X chromosome. There are no known risk factors for Turner Syndrome, as it occurs unpredictably during the formation of eggs or sperm or early in embryonic development. Unlike many genetic conditions, it is not passed down from one generation to the next.

Symptoms of Turner Syndrome

The symptoms of Turner Syndrome can vary widely but typically affect growth, physical development, and fertility. Short stature is one of the most common features, often becoming noticeable during early childhood. Females with Turner Syndrome may have a stocky build, a broad chest with widely spaced nipples, and a webbed neck. Many also experience delayed or absent puberty and are unable to conceive naturally due to ovarian failure. Other symptoms may include heart defects, kidney abnormalities, hearing

loss, and recurrent ear infections. Turner Syndrome can also affect cognitive development, particularly in areas such as spatial reasoning or mathematics, though intelligence is usually within the normal range.

Pathophysiology of Turner Syndrome

The absence or abnormality of one X chromosome disrupts the normal development of the body, particularly in growth and reproductive systems. The SHOX gene, which is critical for bone growth and is located on the X chromosome, is often absent or deficient in Turner Syndrome, leading to short stature and skeletal abnormalities. The loss of ovarian function due to underdeveloped or missing ovaries results in low levels of estrogen and other reproductive hormones, causing delayed puberty and infertility. Heart and kidney defects occur due to abnormal development during early embryonic stages, and hearing loss can result from structural abnormalities in the ears.

Diagnosis of Turner Syndrome

Diagnosing Turner Syndrome typically involves a combination of physical examinations, medical history, and genetic testing. Doctors may suspect Turner Syndrome based on characteristic features such as short stature, delayed puberty, or certain physical traits. A karyotype test, which examines the number and structure of chromosomes, is the most definitive method for diagnosing the condition. Prenatal diagnosis is also possible through procedures such as amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling, which analyze fetal chromosomes. Early diagnosis allows for timely treatment and better management of symptoms and complications.

Treatment and Management of Turner Syndrome

Although there is no cure for Turner Syndrome, various treatments can help manage its symptoms and improve quality of life. Growth hormone therapy is often recommended during childhood to increase height, with medications such as somatropin (Humatrope) commonly used. Estrogen replacement therapy is essential for initiating puberty and maintaining secondary sexual characteristics, and it is often combined with progesterone to regulate the menstrual cycle. Regular monitoring and management of associated conditions, such as heart or kidney defects, are critical. Psychological support and educational interventions can help address learning difficulties and emotional challenges. Advances in reproductive technology, including egg donation and in-vitro fertilization, offer options for women with Turner Syndrome who wish to have children.

Prognosis of Turner Syndrome

The prognosis for individuals with Turner Syndrome depends on early diagnosis and effective management of symptoms. With proper medical care, most females with Turner Syndrome can lead healthy and productive lives. Lifespan may be slightly reduced due to complications such as heart disease or diabetes, but regular monitoring and treatment can mitigate these risks. Growth hormone therapy can significantly improve height, and hormone replacement therapy helps develop secondary sexual characteristics. Advances in medical care and early interventions have greatly improved the outlook for individuals with Turner Syndrome.

Living with Turner Syndrome

Living with Turner Syndrome involves managing the physical, emotional, and social aspects of the condition.

Regular medical care is essential to monitor and treat associated health issues such as heart or kidney problems. Hormone therapies and other treatments can help individuals achieve normal development and improve quality of life. Support from family, friends, and healthcare providers plays a critical role in addressing the emotional challenges of living with a chronic condition. Many individuals find strength and encouragement by connecting with support groups or organizations dedicated to Turner Syndrome. With proper care and support, females with Turner Syndrome can lead fulfilling lives and achieve their personal goals.

Conclusion

Turner Syndrome is a genetic condition that affects growth, development, and fertility in females. While there is no cure, early diagnosis and proper management can greatly improve quality of life and outcomes for those affected. This guide provides comprehensive information to help patients, families, and caregivers understand Turner Syndrome and navigate its challenges. Advances in medical care and treatments continue to offer hope for individuals with Turner Syndrome, enabling them to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

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