

1 in 300 Canadians are at risk of hemochromatosis. Many don't know.



Hereditary hemochromatosis is a disorder causing iron overload, which can damage organs and lead to liver cancer, heart failure or diabetes.

If you have **two or more** of these symptoms, a simple blood test could prevent further complications — and even save your life.

- ✓ Chronic fatigue or tiredness
- ✓ Pain and stiffness in the joints of the hand particularly the small joints at the base of the thumb, index and middle fingers
- ✓ Abdominal pain and bloating in the upper right region
- ✓ Loss of libido and/or erectile dysfunction in men
- ✓ Onset of diabetes (type 2) and/or elevated glucose levels
- ✓ Loss of libido and irregular periods and/or early menopause in women
- ✓ Pigmentation of the skin resembling a sun tan or slate grey colour
- ✓ An irregular heartbeat
- ✓ Thyroid problems
- ✓ Elevated liver enzymes
- ✓ Personality changes, mood swings; anger and depression

Physicians, did you know that 1 in 9 Canadians carry the hemochromatosis gene? 1 in 300 are at risk of the disorder.

Know the risks:

- Hemochromatosis causes the body to absorb up to three times the normal amount of iron, which damages organs and threatens lives.
- Untreated iron overload can lead to liver disease, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and cancer.
- Nonspecific symptoms such as arthralgias, fatigue, and abdominal pain may be noted years before organ dysfunction becomes apparent.

Know the signs:

- Patients presenting with two or more of the symptoms listed on the reverse of this postcard may be at risk.
- Arthritis (including premature osteoarthritis and classic arthropathy of thumb, index and middle fingers)
- Unexplained congestive heart failure or cardiomyopathy
- Adult-onset, brittle diabetes
- Hypogonadism
- Increased skin pigmentation

Know the steps:

- Begin with a blood test for serum ferritin and transferrin saturation levels, and confirm your diagnosis with HFE genetic testing.
- Therapeutic phlebotomy is treatment of choice and effective in reducing tissue iron stores to normal.

For the
HFE-Associated
Hereditary
Hemochromatosis
Investigations
and Management
guidelines, physicians
should visit
BCGuidelines.ca