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MADISON NEUROLOGY LLC

608 403 0000

Neurology Care 7 days a Week. Because Your Brain Matters.

Corticobasal Degeneration (CBD)

Patient education guide · Neurodegenerative & Memory · Madison Neurology LLC

What is it?

Corticobasal degeneration is a rare, progressive brain disorder that typically begins with stiffness, clumsiness, or jerking of one limb — often described as the arm or hand 'not doing what it's told.' Over time it affects movement, coordination, speech, and thinking on both sides. It is an atypical parkinsonism caused by tau protein accumulation.

How does it happen?

CBD results from abnormal tau protein buildup in the cortex and basal ganglia. The cause is unknown, it is not directly inherited, and age (typically onset 50-70) is the main factor.

Common symptoms

- Progressive stiffness and clumsiness of one arm or leg (asymmetric onset)
- Jerky movements (myoclonus) and a limb that seems to act on its own ('alien limb')
- Difficulty with learned movements like using tools (apraxia)
- Slurred or effortful speech
- Gradual cognitive changes, especially in language and executive function

How is it diagnosed?

Diagnosis is clinical, supported by MRI showing asymmetric cortical shrinkage and by exclusion of other causes. It can be difficult to distinguish from PSP or other tau disorders; biomarker research is improving accuracy.

How is it treated?

Care is symptomatic and rehabilitative: physical and occupational therapy for function and safety, speech therapy, Botox for painful stiffness or dystonia, medication trials for rigidity and myoclonus

(e.g., levodopa trial, clonazepam), and treatment of mood symptoms. Specialist referral and clinical trial participation are encouraged.

What does the future hold?

CBD progresses over roughly 6-8 years on average, with mobility, communication, and swallowing gradually affected. Coordinated therapy and caregiver support maintain independence and comfort as long as possible.

Questions patients commonly ask

Q: Why does one side seem affected first?

A: CBD characteristically starts asymmetrically — a key feature that helps distinguish it from Parkinson's and other disorders.

Q: Are there medications that help?

A: No drug slows the disease, but levodopa trials, Botox, and anti-myoclonus medications can ease specific symptoms.

Q: Is it genetic?

A: Typical CBD is not inherited; familial cases are very rare.

National support groups & resources

- **CurePSP** — psp.org — 1-800-457-4777
- **National Organization for Rare Disorders** — rarediseases.org — 1-800-999-6673
- **American Academy of Neurology — Brain & Life patient resources** — brainandlife.org

(Organization contact details were current at the time of compilation; please verify online.)

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