



Ataxia

People with ataxia can have problems with movement, balance and speech

What may happen

Ataxia is a neurological symptom – a symptom that affects the brain. It causes a lack of coordination of muscle movements, and can lead to those affected being unsteady on their feet, being clumsy and possibly having problems with walking.

What you can do

There is no specific treatment for ataxia, although physical therapy, including exercises, can help. With time, walking may become difficult and you may need to consider the occasional use of a wheelchair or walking frame. Using leg braces or a cane can also help to prevent falls.



How we managed ... one family's story

L can walk with support but, due to dementia, she forgets she cannot walk on her own very well. As she leaves the living room she will bang into every piece of furniture, then each side of the door. A few years ago she was able to walk well on her own, but due to the ataxia she is not now able to walk in a straight line and tends to walk with her feet apart. More than once passers-by have thought she was drunk, which has obviously been upsetting for her. Although still mobile, L does like to link arms with someone when walking and, on occasion, uses a wheelchair.

Who can help?

A physiotherapist may be able to help with therapy and exercises, an occupational therapist could assist with any aids or equipment that may be of use. Their aim will be to maintain mobility for as long as possible, as this will help to keep leg muscles strong and also aid respiratory function and digestion.

This leaflet forms part of a resource pack published by the Niemann-Pick Disease Group (UK). It is intended to be read in conjunction with the other parts of the pack. If you do not have the other documents in the pack or you would like further information, please contact us at the email address below.

niemann-pick@zetnet.co.uk

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