

# Guillain Barre Syndrome: Notes for UPSC Prelims

This topic about Guillain Barre Syndrome is relevant for the IAS exam , as it will be asked in the General Studies segment of the exam. The notes taken from this article will be useful for aspirants

## Brief facts about the Guillain Barre Syndrome

Guillain Barre syndrome is a rare auto-immune disease that shows up as a muscle weakness condition. The peripheral nervous system gets severely affected due to this condition. The initial symptoms are typically changes in sensation or pain along with muscle weakness, beginning in the feet and hands, often spreading to the arms and upper body, with both sides being involved.

The symptoms may develop over hours to a few weeks. During the acute phase, the disorder can be life-threatening, with about 15 percent of people developing weakness of the breathing muscles and, therefore, requiring mechanical ventilation. Some are affected by changes in the function of the autonomic nervous system, which can lead to dangerous abnormalities in heart rate and blood pressure.

The diagnosis is usually made based on the signs and symptoms, through the exclusion of alternative causes, and supported by tests such as nerve conduction studies and examination of the cerebrospinal fluid.

The symptoms of this disease usually reflect in 2-week time. And the consequences can be life-threatening.

### Who is at risk for Guillain Barre Syndrome?

Guillian Barre syndrome can affect people of any age or either sex, though it is slightly more common in older people and males. In fact, the risk of getting the syndrome increases as the person grows old over time.

### What triggers Guillain Barre Syndrome?

The exact cause of Guillain-Barré syndrome is unknown to the medical fraternity. The disorder usually appears days or weeks after a major respiratory and digestive infection. On rare occasions, recent surgery or immunization can trigger Guillain-Barré syndrome. There have been instances when the recent infection by zika virus has triggered the syndrome. Therefore it is hard to narrow down a single cause of the syndrome.

### What are the early symptoms of Guillain Barre Syndrome?

The following are the first signs of the syndrome afflicting a person:

- A tingling or prickling sensation in your fingers and toes.
- Gradual muscle weakness in your legs that travels to your upper body and gets worse over time.
- Increasing difficulty in walking steadily.
- Moving your eyes or face, talking, chewing, or swallowing will become a strenuous task.
- Severe pain in the lower.

### Is Guillain Barre contagious?

No, Guillain-Barre syndrome is not contagious. The onset of the syndrome follows a viral or bacterial infection, such as the Flu.

### Can you die from Guillain Barre Syndrome?

Though the majority of people eventually recover from the syndrome, this can sometimes take a long time and around 1 in 5 people have long-term problems. The vast majority of people recover within a year.

A very small number of patients ranging from 3%–5% of Guillain-Barré syndrome die from complications, such as paralysis of the muscles that control breathing, blood infection, lung clots, or cardiac arrest.