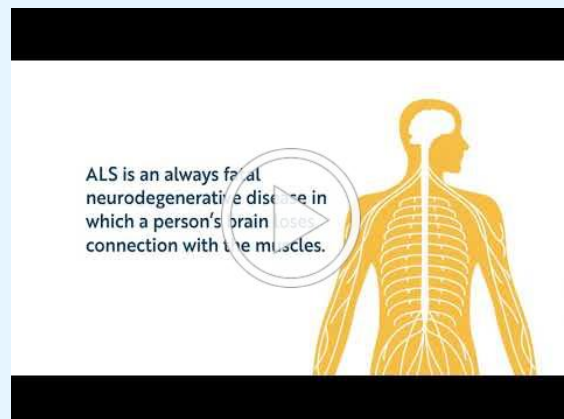


Every May, the ALS community bands together for ALS Awareness Month.



### What is ALS

ALS, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord.

[Read More](#)



### Symptoms

The progression rate of ALS can be quite variable, as well. Although the mean survival time with ALS is two to five years, some people live five years, 10 years or even longer.

Symptoms can begin in the muscles that control speech and swallowing or in the hands, arms, legs or feet. Not all people with ALS experience the same symptoms or the same sequences or patterns of progression. However, progressive muscle weakness and paralysis are universally experienced.

A gradual onset of progressive muscle weakness – which is generally painless – is the most common initial symptom in ALS. Other early symptoms vary but can include tripping, dropping things, abnormal fatigue of the arms and/or legs, slurred speech, muscle cramps and twitches and uncontrollable periods of laughing or crying.

[Read More](#)



### Diagnosis

ALS is a difficult disease to diagnose. There is no one test or procedure to ultimately establish the diagnosis of ALS. It's only through a clinical examination and series of diagnostic tests, often ruling out other diseases that mimic ALS, that a diagnosis can be established.

A comprehensive diagnostic workup includes most, if not all, of the following procedures:

- Electrodiagnostic tests, including electromyography (EMG) and nerve conduction velocity (NCV)
- Blood and urine studies, including high resolution serum protein electrophoresis, thyroid and parathyroid hormone levels and 24-hour urine collection for heavy metals
- Spinal tap
- X-rays, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)
- Myelogram of cervical spine
- Muscle and/or nerve biopsy
- A thorough neurological examination

[Learn More](#)

## Stages of ALS

Once ALS starts, it almost always progresses. Most people with ALS eventually lose the ability to walk, dress, write, speak, swallow and breathe, and their life span is shortened. Early symptoms of ALS often include muscle weakness or stiffness. Progression of weakness, wasting and paralysis of the muscles of the limbs, trunk, and those that control vital functions generally follows.

What differs most for every person is how fast and in what order symptoms and progression occur. And, while the average survival time is three years, about 20% of people with ALS live five years, 10% survive 10 years and 5% live 20 years or longer. Progression isn't always a straight line in an individual, either. It's common to have periods lasting weeks to months with very little or no loss of function.

There are even very rare examples of significant improvement and recovery of lost function. These ALS "arrests" and "reversals" are, unfortunately, usually transient. Less than 1% of people with ALS will have significant improvement in function lasting 12 months or longer.

## Resources and Support

### Assistance to Newly Diagnosed

Information and assistance for people recently diagnosed with ALS or recently referred to the ALS Association.

### Equipment/Assistive Technology

Consultation on the use of equipment, home adaptations and computer-enhanced communication devices, as well as an equipment loan pool.

### Family Support

Providing encouragement to those affected by ALS through support groups, caregiver/survivor support, etc.

### Resources, Referrals and Education

Linking families to appropriate resources to help them navigate the complex system of health, social, legal and financial services.

### Connect with the ALS Association for Support

They can help with the emotional, physical, and financial burdens of living with ALS.

[Get started with the ALS Association](#)

### May Jokes

**Why don't racecar drivers eat before a race?**

So they don't get Indy-gestion.

**Where is the only place in Indiana without a pothole?**

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway

**Why did the race car driver cross the road?**

To turn left

**Few people know that actor Matthew McConaughey**

**tried out for the Indy 500. He failed, but kept saying "All right, all right, all right!"**



Brown and Brown | 11711 N. Meridian St. Suite 100 | Carmel, IN 46032 US

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