



# What is an autoimmune condition?

**In our bodies, the immune system (your body's defence against infection and disease) is meant to protect us from harmful invaders like bacteria and viruses. However, in autoimmune conditions, the immune system gets mixed up and starts attacking healthy cells by mistake.**

To explain how this works, think of your body like a game of Space Invaders, where your white blood cells (the cells that fight) are the cannon at the bottom, and a disease that you have caught are the Space Invaders. In the game, you shoot and destroy the harmful invaders, but imagine that every shot that you miss, mistakenly targets your body, causing inflammation, pain, and damage. This is what an autoimmune condition does.



There are over eighty types of autoimmune conditions, including GBS, CIDP, MMN, and other inflammatory neuropathies. There are other ones as well like Multiple Sclerosis, and Motor Neuron Disease. Each condition has its own set of symptoms that impact on different areas in the body, with some like GBS and CIDP targeting the peripheral nerves (the nerves outside of your brain and spinal cord). In these conditions, the immune system attacks the lining around the nerves causing them to misfire. This is what creates the symptoms associated with each condition.

No one really knows why autoimmune conditions occur, but there are lots of studies that suggest that genetics, the environments we live in, and a malfunction in the immune system are all things that might lead to their development. While we can't control our genetics, we can make lifestyle choices that may help manage these conditions, such as eating a healthy diet, getting regular exercise, managing stress, and avoiding smoking.

Everyone's journey with an autoimmune condition is different, but what we do know is that if you get diagnosed and treated quickly, then the chance of long-term impacts can be reduced. This is why you should talk to a doctor or health professional if you notice anything unusual. There are treatments and support available to help people live well with autoimmune conditions, include treatments to manage the immune system's activity, relieve symptoms, and reduce inflammation.

GAIN is here to support people and families impacted by GBS, CIDP, and other inflammatory neuropathies, offering information, advice, and guidance; providing practical support where it is needed; funding and undertaking research; and raising awareness. If you want to know more about these conditions then reach out to us, we are more than happy to support.