



# Guillain-Barré Syndrome

**Guillain-Barré Syndrome (we just say GBS, but its pronounced ghee-yan bar-ray) is a rare but potentially life changing autoimmune condition that affects the peripheral nervous system (the nerves outside of your brain and spinal cord). It causes muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis. Symptoms often start with tingling or weakness in the legs, which can then spread to the arms and upper body. In severe cases, GBS can lead to total paralysis, affecting breathing and other essential functions. Some people may need intensive care support, including being put on a ventilator.**



The exact cause of GBS is not fully understood, but it often occurs after a viral or bacterial infection. We think that what happens is that the body's immune system (your body's defence against infection and disease) tries to fight off an infection, and instead attacks your own nerves by mistake. This leads to the symptoms of GBS.

When most people have GBS symptoms, they contact their doctor, call 111, or go to A&E. Diagnosis of GBS typically involves a physical examination, nerve tests, and sometimes a lumbar puncture. As GBS is pretty rare, many doctors may not have seen a case, so a Neurologist may be involved. Early diagnosis of GBS is really important to make sure people get the best treatment.

Most people with GBS stay in hospital for a few weeks, but treatment may take longer. Treatment for GBS usually involves IVIG (intravenous immunoglobulin) therapy or plasma exchange. These help to suppress the immune response and reduce inflammation.

Everyone's GBS journey is different, and recovery varies from person to person. Some may experience a full recovery within a few weeks or months, while others may have longer term weakness or other long term complications. Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy can help with physical recovery, but many people will also need input with their emotional health to help cope with longer term impacts to their lives.

Guillain-Barré Syndrome can be life changing and have long term impacts, but for many people there is a good recovery. GAIN is here to support people and families impacted by GBS, 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 GBS then reach out to us, we are more than happy to support.