Scleroderma

Which organs are affected in Scleroderma?

- Skin, Intestine, lung, blood vessels and joints are affected in this disease.

What is Scleroderma?

- There are 100 types of arthritis. Scleroderma is one of them. It affects skin and other organs of body apart from joints. Scleroderma is one of the autoimmune rheumatic diseases,

How many types of scleroderma are there?

The two main types of scleroderma are:

• *Localized scleroderma*

• *Systemic scleroderma*

- Morphea, Linear scleroderma etc are other subtypes which affects small area of skin.

What causes scleroderma?

- The cause of scleroderma is not known. Genetic factors (different genes) appear to play important role in this disease.
- Although exposure to certain chemicals may play a role in some people having scleroderma, the vast majority of patients with scleroderma do not have a history of exposure to any suspicious toxins.

What happens to body in scleroderma?

- Scleroderma is one of the autoimmune rheumatic diseases, meaning that the body's immune system is acting abnormally.
- The main finding in scleroderma is thickening and tightening of the skin.
- Inflammation and scarring of many body parts leads to problems in the lungs, kidneys, heart, intestinal system and other areas. Joints are affected mildly.

What are the symptoms of scleroderma?

- Most of the patients suffer from skin thickening, swelling and tightening over fingers initially. Generalise scleroderma involves skin all over body.
- Colour changes like (blue, white and red) occur in fingers (and sometime toes), often after exposure to cold temperatures. It is known as Raynaud's phenomenon. It occurs when body becomes very sensitive to temperature and blood flow to the hands and fingers is temporarily reduced. It may lead to ulcers over finger tips.
- Cough and breathlessness on exertions is complained by patients having lung involvement.
- Those patients having intestinal involvement complained of burning in stomach, pain in stomach, "gases", diarrhoea etc.

How scleroderma is diagnosed? Which investigations help in diagnosis?

- Patient's symptoms and physical examination helps in diagnosis.
- Blood test is not essential for making diagnosis. Skin biopsy, ANA [IF], ENA profile can help in diagnosis at very early stage of the disease.
- Doctor advises basic investigations to study organ involvement once diagnosis is made.