

Amyloidosis - Overview [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 07/2013

ON THIS PAGE: You will find some basic information about this disease, which is not cancer, and the parts of the body it may affect. This is the first page of Cancer.Net's Guide to Amyloidosis. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen. Think of that menu as a roadmap to this full guide.

About amyloidosis

Amyloidosis is a serious and potentially life-threatening blood disease. Although amyloidosis is not a type of cancer, it may be associated with certain blood cancers like [multiple myeloma](#) [3]. The basis of amyloidosis is an abnormal protein called amyloid that builds up in tissues or organs. As the amount of amyloid protein increases in a tissue or organ, it begins to interfere with the tissue or organ's healthy function. Eventually, this amyloid protein buildup causes symptoms and organ failure.

Amyloidosis is a very rare disorder, occurring in only one to two people out of every million individuals. Since it is such a rare disorder, it has been difficult to research. However, doctors and researchers have begun to understand more about amyloidosis throughout the past few decades. As a result, ongoing research continues to be important to learn more about this disorder.

Types of amyloidosis

There are different types of amyloidosis, including the following:

AL amyloidosis. This is the most common type of amyloidosis in the United States. The amyloid proteins that build up in the tissues in this condition are known as light (L) chains and are sometimes described as kappa or lambda light chains. AL amyloidosis is not usually associated with another underlying condition, although it can be linked with [multiple myeloma](#) [4], a blood cancer that makes similar abnormal proteins. However, the proteins in myeloma usually do not build up in the tissues or organs.

AA amyloidosis. In this condition, the amyloid protein that builds up in the tissues is called the A protein. AA amyloidosis is associated with some chronic diseases, such as diabetes, tuberculosis, rheumatoid arthritis, or inflammatory bowel disease. It may also be linked to aging.

AA amyloidosis can affect the spleen, liver, kidneys, adrenal glands, and lymph nodes (tiny, bean-shaped organs that fight infection).

Hereditary amyloidosis (ATTR). Hereditary amyloidosis is rare. It is a specific type of amyloidosis that can be passed down from generation to generation within a family. It may cause peripheral sensory and motor neuropathy problems (issues relating to the central nervous system), carpal tunnel syndrome, and eye abnormalities. The most common subtypes involve a protein called transthyretin (TTR).

This section covers AL, AA, and hereditary amyloidosis. Other types of amyloidosis include ?2 microglobulin amyloidosis, which occurs in some patients with chronic renal (kidney) problems, and types of amyloidosis located in specific areas of the body.

To continue reading this guide, use the menu on the side of your screen to select another section.

Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/amyloidosis/overview>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/multiple-myeloma>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Multiple+Myeloma>