

What is it?



Anti-phospholipid antibody syndrome (also known as “APLAS”) is a rare but potentially serious autoimmune disease. This means for some reason, your immune system goes awry and mounts an attack against your body. It does this by producing antibodies called “anti-phospholipid antibodies.” These antibodies can cause vascular (blood flow) problems, including blood clots in arteries and veins. They can also cause pregnancy complications such as repeated miscarriages.

There are two types of APLAS:

- 1. Primary APLAS occurs in the absence of any other disease.**
- 2. Secondary APLAS is linked to other autoimmune diseases such as lupus.**



APLAS is like sludge in the pipes

APLAS can lead to blood flow problems including blood clots in the arteries and veins. You can think of it like the plumbing in your house: if you get a slimy plug in one of your drains, it can prevent water from flowing freely through the rest of the pipes. Or if lime builds up on the inside of the pipe, a piece can break off and make its way to a smaller pipe, where it can block off the water supply. With APLAS, the blood can thicken and form a clot in the arteries, cutting off the supply of oxygen and nutrients to organs and tissues. In the veins, if a piece of the clot breaks off, it can travel through your blood vessels and get lodged somewhere else like the lungs, causing a pulmonary embolism.

What is it going to do to me?



There are many different symptoms that can be associated with APLAS. In pregnant women, APLAS can cause the placenta to form improperly. This can result in a miscarriage or pregnancy loss.

APLAS can cause blood clots in the veins. This can result in deep vein thrombosis (DVT) if the clot occurs in the deep veins of the leg. If this clot breaks free, it can float to the lung and cause a pulmonary embolism. If this happens, chest pain and shortness of breath can occur.

Blood clots can also occur in the arteries. If an artery supplying the brain is affected, a stroke is possible. Any artery can potentially be affected including those supplying blood to the lungs, kidneys, bones, bowels and heart.

Other symptoms of APLAS include Raynaud’s phenomenon (fingers turning white in the cold), migraines, blotchy skin, and neurologic symptoms. This is rare but may include hearing loss, seizures, psychosis and abnormal movements. Some people with APLAS may have a low platelet count or anemia.

Visit RheumInfo.com



RheumInfo.com is a free educational website where you can learn more about APLAS and treatments for the disease. The website is operated by Dr. Andy Thompson, a rheumatologist.

What can I do about it?



APLAS can be a serious disease. If you have APLAS or think you may have it, your family doctor should refer you to a specialist. You may need to see a hematologist (a specialist in blood disorders) and a rheumatologist (a specialist in autoimmune disorders).

There are effective medications available for the treatment of APLAS. Your treatment plan will be tailored just for you depending on your symptoms.

Medications including heparin and warfarin (Coumadin) are commonly used to thin the blood and prevent blood clots.

Treatment during pregnancy can be more complicated. Aspirin can be taken early in pregnancy. Pregnant women who need more than aspirin to control their disease can also be given heparin.

Here are some other recommendations:

- **Learn as much as you can about the disease**
- **Attend your medical appointments regularly**
- **If you are a woman, avoid taking oral birth control pills containing estrogen**
- **Learn about the medications used to treat APLAS**