

What Is Huntington Disease?

Huntington disease (HD) is a hereditary and neurodegenerative illness with physical, cognitive and emotional symptoms. Having HD is similar to having the elements of Parkinson's disease, ALS, Alzheimer's, and schizophrenia, all at once.

HD is caused by a mutation in the gene that makes the huntingtin protein. In people with HD, the CAG sequence is repeated too many times at the beginning of the gene. That causes cells to manufacture a harmful protein called mutant huntingtin. The mutant huntingtin protein causes certain parts of the brain to die - specifically the caudate, the putamen and, as the disease progresses, the cerebral cortex.

As the brain cells die, physical, cognitive and emotional symptoms will appear. To date, there are no drugs to slow or stop the progression of Huntington disease; however, there are specific drugs available to reduce some of the symptoms. Research is being conducted in Canada and globally to find promising treatments and approaches to treating HD.

Who Gets Huntington Disease and What Are the Symptoms?

Huntington disease is a genetic disorder. The HD gene is dominant, which means that each child of a parent with HD has a 50 per cent chance of inheriting the disease and is said to be at-risk. Males and females have the same risk of inheriting the disease. HD occurs in all races. Symptoms usually appear between the ages of 35 and 55, but the disease can appear in youth (under 20 years – Juvenile HD) or older adults (Late Onset HD).

Symptoms vary from person to person and at different stages of the disease. Physical symptoms include weight loss, involuntary movements (chorea), diminished coordination, and difficulty walking, talking and swallowing. Cognitive symptoms include difficulty with focus, planning, recall of information and making decisions as well as impaired insight. Depression, apathy, irritability, anxiety, and obsessive behaviour are some of the emotional symptoms that can be observed in a person with HD.



Founded by Ralph and Ariel Walker in 1973, the Huntington Society of Canada is a not-for-profit charitable organization that is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

HSC is self-funded and dedicates those funds to Family Services and research efforts.

HSC raises funds with the following objectives:

- Maximize the quality of life of people living with HD by delivering services to individuals and families, and by providing education to healthcare professionals
- Advance medical research to slow progression of the disease and to prevent HD
- Enable others to better understand the disease

For more information or to donate

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WE ARE HERE TO HELP

HSC is Here to Help

The Huntington Society of Canada (HSC) is here to help! HSC is a national not-for-profit charitable organization that focuses on providing support to individuals and families who are affected by Huntington disease.

HSC also supports world-class research with the ultimate goal of preventing HD for future generations and treating and/or slowing the progression of the disease for individuals and families who are currently affected.

HSC is involved in various advocacy efforts to ensure that individuals' rights are respected.

Our volunteer chapters across Canada also provide an excellent informal support network for people who are affected by this devastating disease. It is these same amazing volunteers who raise a large portion of the funds to ensure we can support our mission.

What Kind of Help Do We Offer?

- Family Services team members offer direct assistance to individuals and families, information sessions, educational sessions (in-services) and support groups
- Educational resources (e.g. booklets, factsheets, Horizon newsletter) for individuals, families and healthcare professionals are available in both printed and electronic formats
- The HSC website, emails and social media can provide additional information as service opportunities and community events come up
- Information about clinical trials and research



Family Services

HSC's support services are offered by registered social workers and professionals who provide support to individuals and families affected by HD. Also known as Resource Centre Directors, they are located across Canada.

The Family Services team offers support and services to persons with HD, persons at-risk, persons who are gene positive or gene negative, carers and family members, community members, friends and neighbours. Some of the services offered include information and education, referrals to community resources, and individual advocacy.

In addition, the Family Services team offers education and support to health, social service and community workers. The team also collaborates with other service providers to improve and expand existing services as well as increase awareness and understanding of Huntington disease and support for advocacy.

HSC Supports Clinical Trials and Research

The universal goal for the international HD research focus is to find treatments that reverse, slow or prevent the progression of HD. Canada's strategic research funding has helped to develop a critical mass of research in Canada. HSC's focus includes research and support for clinical trials as well as neurology fellowships and future HD clinicians.

Clinical trials depend on the participation of individuals and families affected by HD. HSC plays a key role in bridging the relationship between researchers and individuals by educating Canadians on the importance of the clinical trial process, how they can get involved, and why their participation is crucial.

HSC will continue to build a strong foundation for clinical trials in Canada and work in partnership with our HD community to find answers.

For more information on HSC research visit www.huntingtonsociety.ca/research.

Advocacy Efforts

HSC has a mandate to advocate for systemic change to enhance the social, political and environmental conditions that contribute to the well-being of individuals and families affected by HD. Advocacy can be done on an individual, regional or national level.



Support Networks

While the Family Services team provides a variety of supports, information and advocacy to individuals and families affected by HD, there is another very large and important group of people who are critical to the success of HSC's mission.

This group is the network of volunteers who form the chapters across Canada.

Chapters participate in a wide variety of activities including fundraising, increasing public awareness, providing education, and supporting individuals and families who are a part of this community.

Without the incredible passion and efforts of the chapter volunteers, HSC couldn't do the work that we do.

Get involved! Find a chapter near you:
www.huntingtonsociety.ca/chapters-near-you.