Hepatitis C and Autoimmune Disorders

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Autoimmune disorders are where the immune system attacks parts of your own body by mistake. It's common for hepatitis C patients to also have an autoimmune disorder.

The Most Common Autoimmune Disorders Associated with Hepatitis C

Thyroid Disorders
With hepatitis C, both hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism can develop. Hashimoto's thyroiditis is the most common thyroid disorder observed in patients with hepatitis C.

Cryoglobulinemia
Cryoglobulinemia is abnormal proteins in the blood. These protein clump together and cause blood to thicken in lower temperatures. Cryoglobulinemia can cause blood circulation problems which lead to damage to the skin, joints, nerves, and organs, particularly targeting the liver and kidneys.

Rheumatoid Arthritis
Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic inflammatory disorder that affects the lining of the joints, causing painful swelling and can result in bone erosion and joint deformity. The inflammation can also cause damage to other parts of the body.

Rheumatoid arthritis can be seen in patients with hepatitis C and associated with mixed cryoglobulinemia.

Sjogren's syndrome
Sjogren's syndrome attacks the glands that make tears and saliva. This can cause dry mouth and dry eyes. Sjogren's syndrome is also associated with nonerosive arthritis which is inflammation of one or more joints, without loss of cartilage or destruction of bone. Sjogren's syndrome is also associated with loss of strength, weakness, and fatigue.

Immune Thrombocytopenic Purpura
Immune thrombocytopenic purpura is also referred to as idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura, which is a disorder that may lead to easy or excessive bleeding and bruising. The bleeding is a result of low platelets (cells that help the blood clot.) The disorder affects children as well as adults.

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus
Systemic lupus erythematosus is also referred to simply as Lupus, which is a chronic disease that causes inflammation in the connective tissues, such as cartilage and the lining of the blood

vessels. There are several types of lupus, but systemic lupus erythematosus is the most common and the one most associated with hepatitis C.

It’s reported that other autoimmune conditions can also be seen with hepatitis C but the above conditions are the most common.

Be sure to talk to your liver specialist (hepatologist or gastroenterologist) about all the symptoms you are experiencing. Ask to be tested for autoimmune conditions if you have hepatitis C.

Do you have symptoms of other conditions along with having hepatitis C?

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