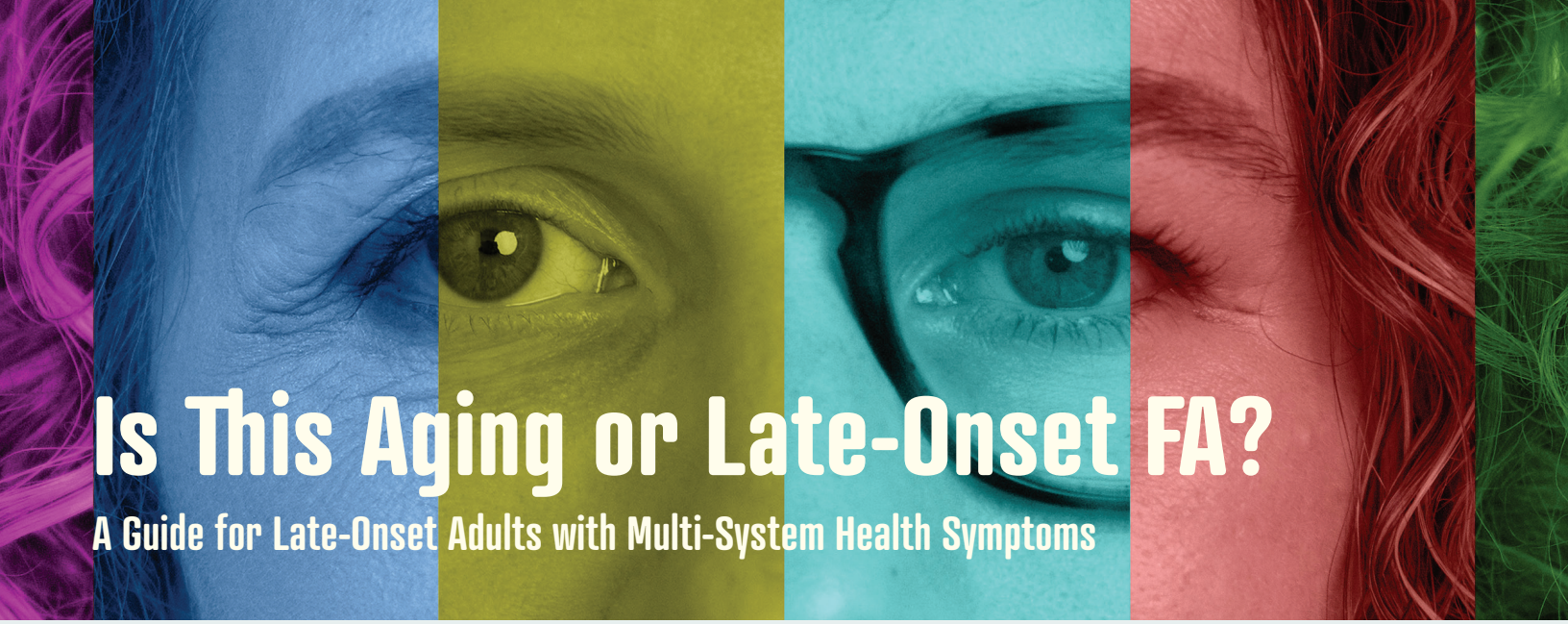


Is This Aging or Late-Onset FA?

A Guide for Late-Onset Adults with Multi-System Health Symptoms

What is Late-Onset Friedreich Ataxia (LOFA)?

A genetic condition primarily affecting the nervous system in which symptoms appear at or after age 25 (approximately 25% of all FA cases)[1,9]

- Caused by mutations in the FXN gene
- Often misdiagnosed as other conditions, such as Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease, multiple sclerosis, and multiple system atrophy[2,8]
- Affects nerves, coordination, and movement; in rare cases, heart, muscles, and metabolism
- Symptom onset and diagnosis occur at or after age 25 and symptom progression typically progresses at a slower rate than early-onset FA
- As compared to early-onset FA, LOFA shows a wider variety of neurological symptoms (e.g., spasticity) and is less likely to involve heart problems, like cardiomyopathy[2]

Talk to a doctor...

1

If you experience a sudden onset of any of these symptoms and signs, this may mark something other than FA or aging – such as a secondary condition that would require discussion and evaluation with your primary care doctor or neurologist

2

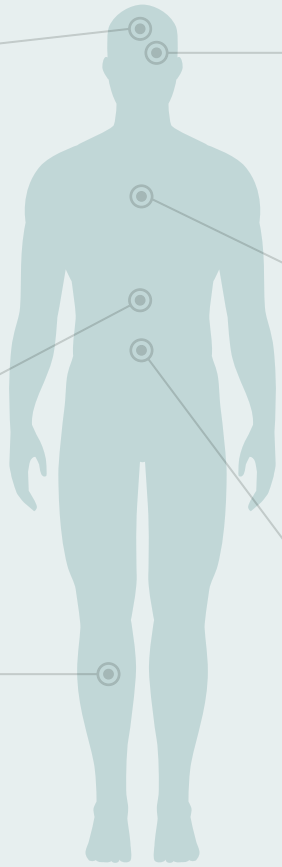
If symptoms are acute (severe), see a doctor right away. Late-Onset FA symptoms are slow progressing, so this may be a sign of something different

3

To evaluate all of your symptoms and any new symptoms. Medical professionals may identify treatment options for the symptoms that may improve FA

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Normal Aging vs. FA Symptoms by Body System



NEUROLOGICAL SYSTEM

Possible FA Signs:

- Walking becomes progressively unsteady/uneven (not just occasional)
- Slowly experience frequent tripping or needing to hold walls/furniture
- Coordination problems worsen slowly, over months/years
- Speech gradually becomes slurred or slow
- Difficulty swallowing develops
- Numbness/tingling in feet and/or hands
- Can't feel position of feet (especially in dark)[4]

Normal Aging: Minor balance issues, occasional stumbles, slight slowing

AUTONOMIC SYSTEM

Possible FA Signs:

- Bladder urgency/frequency in 30s–40s
- Feet always cold, even in warm weather
- Dizziness when standing
- Sexual dysfunction with other symptoms[3]

Normal Aging: Mild bladder changes after 50, occasional circulation issues

MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM

Possible FA Signs:

- Weakness that's disproportionate to your age
- High-arched feet or curled toes
- Legs feel stiff or tight
- Extreme fatigue after minimal activity[3]

Normal Aging: Gradual strength decline after 50, morning stiffness

VISION AND HEARING

Possible FA Signs:

- Vision problems not corrected by glasses
- Difficulty tracking moving objects
- Eye movement problems
- Color vision changes[3]

Normal Aging: Need reading glasses after 40, gradual hearing decline

CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM

Possible FA Signs (for people in their 30s–50s):

- Heart palpitations or irregular heartbeat
- Unusual shortness of breath with mild activity
- Chest discomfort
- Diagnosed with cardiomyopathy at younger age[5,6]

Normal Aging: Gradual decrease in stamina, blood pressure changes after 50, coronary artery disease

Any acute or sudden cardiac symptoms, regardless of FA diagnosis, should be considered a potential emergency and require immediate care by a healthcare provider

METABOLIC/ENDOCRINE SYSTEM

Possible FA Signs:

- Diabetes diagnosis before age 45
- Unexplained glucose intolerance
- Family members with similar issues, plus other symptoms[7]

Normal Aging: Diabetes risk increases after 45, slower metabolism

IF YOU SUSPECT LATE-ONSET FA:

- Document your symptoms and progression timeline
- Record family medical history
- Schedule appointment with your doctor
- Request neurological evaluation
- Discuss genetic testing with your doctor
- Connect with patient organizations like FARA and NAF (below) for resources

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A DOCTOR:

- **Multiple symptoms** from different body systems above
- **Progressive worsening** over months/years
- **Family history** of similar symptoms or FA
- **Young age** for symptoms (under 50) that may appear to be due to aging
- **Combination** of balance problems + heart issues + diabetes
- **Unsuccessful** physical therapy and other standard treatments

IF IT IS LATE-ONSET FA:

- **Outlook:** Slower progression than childhood-onset FA
- **Treatments available:** Approved medications, symptom management, physical therapy
- **Clinical trials:** New treatments being tested
- **Support:** Existing patient community and resources
- **Life expectancy:** Often normal or near normal with LOFA[10]

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR:

- *"Can you conduct genetic testing to confirm a Late-Onset FA diagnosis?"*
- *"Should my family members consider genetic testing?"*
- *"Are there indicators to help predict how my condition may evolve?"*
- *"How often should we formally assess my progression?"*
- *"What different treatment options are available?"*
- *"What specialists should be part of my care team?"*

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

FARA
(FRIEDREICH'S ATAXIA RESEARCH ALLIANCE)

NAF
(NATIONAL ATAXIA FOUNDATION)

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