



# Health Awareness

## Sjögren's Syndrome: What Is It Really Like?



(NAPSA)—Sjögren's syndrome is a chronic autoimmune disease affecting up to 4 million Americans, 90 percent of whom are women, with average age of onset being 40-50 years. Symptoms of the disease include dry mouth, dry eyes and fatigue, but are often considered "minor" or "vague," making diagnosis difficult. For a person suffering from Sjögren's syndrome, the journey to diagnosis can be long and frustrating.

Kathy McCarren, Sjögren's syndrome sufferer and a Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation Support Group Leader, describes what it's like to live life with the disease.

### ***When did you experience your first symptoms of Sjögren's syndrome?***

In my mid-20s, my eyes began to feel scratchy and gritty as if there was sand in them. It was hard to do everyday things such as read, watch TV and work on the computer. At around the same time, I started having severe dental problems despite normal brushing, flossing and regular dental visits. I developed several gum line cavities and required numerous root canals. In addition,

I was experiencing unexplained fatigue that prevented me from doing simple tasks such as grocery shopping for my family.

### ***How long did it take to get diagnosed with Sjögren's syndrome?***

After seven to eight years of visits to several different doctors, my ophthalmologist diagnosed me with moderate to severe dry eye, and referred me to a rheumatologist for further testing. When I met my rheumatologist, I relayed my medical history. It did not take him long to tell me that I had a "textbook case" of Sjögren's syndrome. I was so relieved to finally have an answer for why I was feeling this way for so long.

### ***How do you manage the disease?***

When I was first diagnosed, there were no prescription medications available to treat Sjögren's—I used over-the-counter eyedrops to relieve my dry eyes, and made frequent trips to the dentist to manage the effects of my severe dry mouth. Now there are prescription medications available to help stimulate the moisture-producing glands in the

eyes and mouth to retain function that would be lost if left untreated. I am able to control my symptoms and I feel well most of the time. I am also careful to manage stress, as it can tend to trigger extreme fatigue. I know that no two people with Sjögren's syndrome experience the same symptoms; that's why it is so important for individuals to work with their doctors to determine what treatment options are best.

### ***About Sjögren's Syndrome***

Like all autoimmune diseases, there is no cure for Sjögren's syndrome. However, there are ways to manage the symptoms of the disease. Chewing sugar-free gum and drinking water can provide temporary relief from dry mouth symptoms. There are also prescription products approved by the FDA to treat dry mouth symptoms of Sjögren's syndrome. One example, Evoxac® (cevimeline HCl), is an FDA-approved product that has been proven effective in treating the dry mouth symptoms of Sjögren's syndrome.

For more information, visit [www.mydrymouth.com](http://www.mydrymouth.com).

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### ***Note to Editor: Safety Considerations***

*You should not take Evoxac® if you have uncontrolled asthma, eye inflammation, narrow-angle (angle closure) glaucoma or allergies to Evoxac®.*

*Before taking Evoxac®, tell your doctor if you have a heart condition, controlled asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, a history of kidney disease or gallstones, or if you are taking any heart medications, especially "beta-blockers." If you have any of these conditions, your doctor will monitor you under close medical supervision while you are taking Evoxac®.*

*You should be careful when driving at night or performing hazardous activities in reduced lighting while taking Evoxac®. If you sweat excessively while taking Evoxac®, you may become dehydrated. To prevent this, drink extra water and talk to your doctor.*

*The most common side effects are excessive sweating, headache, nausea, sinusitis, upper respiratory infections, rhinitis and diarrhea.*

*Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are taking prescription or over-the-counter medications to avoid any possible drug interactions.*

*The safety and effectiveness of Evoxac® in patients under 18 years of age have not been established.*

*Special care should be taken if you are elderly.*

*Please see the Patient Information sheet and talk to your doctor.*

*For more information, please visit [www.evoxac.com](http://www.evoxac.com) or [www.daiichisankyo-us.com](http://www.daiichisankyo-us.com). Please see full prescribing information.*