

## WHO ARE WE?

The BC ATAXIA SOCIETY is a non-profit registered Charity

and Support Group

for those whose lives have been affected by Ataxia.

We meet regularly

in the

Lower Mainland

offering support and welcoming Speakers.

Please check our

website for current

Meetings, events and details.

[www.bcataxia.org](http://www.bcataxia.org)

**CHAPTER OF:  
NATIONAL ATAXIA  
FOUNDATION (NAF)**

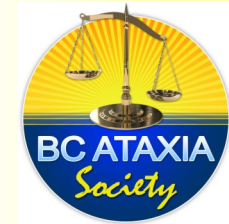
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# BRITISH COLUMBIA ATAXIA SOCIETY



**MISSION STATEMENT:**  
*To broaden awareness about Ataxia among the medical community and the general public; and to provide support for those whose lives have been affected by ataxia.*

## WHAT IS ATAXIA?

Ataxia is a lack of muscle coordination which may affect speech, eye movements, the ability to swallow, walking, picking up objects and other voluntary movements. A person with persistent ataxia may have damage in the part of the brain that controls muscle co-ordination.

## WHAT CAUSES ATAXIA?

Mostly, ataxia is caused by a loss of function in the cerebellum—that part of the brain mentioned above which serves as the ‘co-ordination’ centre. It may also be caused by dysfunction of the pathways leading into and out of the cerebellum. Without these pathways working properly a person with impaired strength or sensation may experience clumsiness. Ataxia is also caused by multiple sclerosis, a head injury, alcohol abuse, a stroke cerebral palsy, a faulty gene or a tumor.

## TYPES OF HEREDITARY ATAXIA

**Recessive:** There are several kinds of recessively inherited ataxias. The two most common are Friederich’s Ataxia (FRDA or FA) and Ataxia Telangectasia (AT). FA is the most common form of ataxia and generally begins in adolescence. It may also occur later in life as a late-onset form. AT is more rare and generally begins in childhood. Both are recessively inherited meaning that BOTH parents must have the gene in order to pass the disorder on. In this case there is a 25% chance that a child will obtain 2 copies of the gene.

**Dominant:** The dominantly inherited ataxia’s are commonly referred to as the Spinocerebellar Ataxia’s (SCA’s). These were previously referred to as Olivopontocerebellar Atrophy (OPCA). Generally, SCA refers to a form of autosomally dominant ataxia. In other words, it is inherited from ONE parent only. If a parent is affected, their children have a 50% chance of inheriting the gene, Ataxia usually develops in adulthood.

**Sex-Linked Ataxia:** A lesser known form, inherited via the sex chromosomes.

**Mitochondrial Disorders:** Genetic defects that affect mitochondrial function can cause ataxia.

## SPORADIC ATAXIA

There are a variety of ataxia’s that are NOT inherited. These include Multiple System Atrophy (MSA), Shy Drager Syndrome and Episodic Ataxia (with the exception of EA-1 and EA-2 which are often genetic.) These are generally brought on by a number of non-inherited conditions.

## ATAXIA FACTS

ATAXIA means lack of co-ordination.

ATAXIA can be caused by a number of neurological conditions.

ATAXIA first appears with signs of stumbling or a ‘drunken walk’, lack of co-ordination and slurred speech. As it progresses over time, most will require the use of a wheelchair.

ATAXIA generally DOES NOT affect the intellectual ability of a person.

ATAXIA is commonly misdiagnosed as Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

ATAXIA with hereditary causes, can often be diagnosed with genetic testing if affected by one with identified genes.

**CURRENTLY, THERE IS NO CURE FOR ATAXIA BUT PROGRESS CONTINUES TO BRING US HOPE!**

