SMA STATE FACT SHEET

Massachusetts

Est. individuals living with SMA: 220
Est. babies born with SMA annually: 6
Est. number of SMA carriers: 138,043

ABOUT SMA AND CURE SMA

Spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) – the number one genetic cause of death for infants – robs people of physical strength by affecting the motor nerve cells in the spinal cord, taking away the ability to walk, eat, or breathe. The disease is caused by a mutation in the survival motor neuron gene 1 (SMN1). Without enough of the SMN protein, nerve cells cannot function properly and eventually die, leading to debilitating and often fatal muscle weakness.

Cure SMA is the largest network of families, clinicians, and research scientists working together to advance SMA research, support affected individuals/caregivers, and educate the public and professional communities about SMA.

MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER INFORMATION

Cure SMA has 36 volunteer-led chapters across the United States. To find and contact the Massachusetts chapter, visit www.curesma.org/chapters

SMA CARE CENTER NETWORK

SMA Care Center Network is the centerpiece of our efforts to address the changing landscape of SMA. The goal of the SMA Care Center Network is to develop an evidence-based standard of care that will improve the lives of all those affected by SMA.

Care Center located in Massachusetts:
Boston Children’s Hospital, Boston, MA

NEW HOPE FOR TREATING SMA

Thanks to the dedication of our community and the ingenuity of our researchers, we now have treatments that target the underlying genetics of SMA. Currently, there are two treatments for SMA approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) – Spinraza and Zolgensma. Both are SMN-enhancing treatments.

But our work is not done. We know what needs to be done to develop and deliver effective therapies that target other systems, pathways, and processes affected by SMA. Our goal is a combination of therapeutic approaches that can be tailored to each individual’s age, stage, and type of SMA. These breakthroughs will continue to change the course of SMA for everyone affected—from infants to adults—and eventually lead to a cure.

TYPES OF SMA

There are four primary types of SMA that are based on the age of onset and highest physical milestone achieved. Type 1 is the most severe and most common, affecting 60 percent of those with SMA and is typically diagnosed during an infant's first six months.

Type 1 SMA
Onset: Before 6 months
Milestones: No sitting

Type 2 SMA
Onset: 6 - 18 months
Milestones: Sitting, not walking

Type 3 SMA
Onset: Childhood after 12 months
Milestones: Walking

Type 4 SMA
Onset: After 30 years old
Milestones: Normal

Last revised on July 2020
Early diagnosis and treatment of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) can lead to improved, long-lasting developmental outcomes for individuals living with SMA. In addition, clinical data shows that SMA treatments and care are more effective when delivered early and pre-symptomatically. Newborn screening is the most effective and efficient way for babies with SMA to access timely treatments and available supports.

SMA INCLUDED ON NATIONAL RECOMMENDED NEWBORN SCREENING PRIORITY LIST

In July 2018, the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services added SMA to the national recommended list for newborn screening—known as the Recommended Uniform Screening Panel or RUSP.

Each state determines what conditions to include in its screening panel, and how to add conditions to this panel. The RUSP is an important guideline for the states in this process, and after being included, several states have taken action to adopt and implement newborn screenings of SMA.

MASSACHUSETTS NEWBORNS SCREENED FOR SMA

Massachusetts added SMA to its newborn screening panel and is currently conducting a SMA newborn screening pilot.

PROCESS TO GET SMA ADDED PERMANENTLY:

The Advisory Committee recommends conditions that should be added to the newborn screening panel. The Advisory Committee will make a recommendation to the Commissioner of Health and then the Commissioner of Health will make an argument to the Public Health Council for making the condition mandatory on the newborn screening panel. Then the Public Health Council will vote whether to make the condition mandatory for screening or not.

MASSACHUSETTS FAMILIES IMPACTED BY SMA SEEK ACTION ON NEWBORN SCREENINGS

Massachusetts residents and families impacted by SMA, supported by Cure SMA, seek immediate action on:

- Implementation of statewide newborn screening for SMA; and
- Support for federal funding for rare disease basic research and newborn screening activities.