

Ataxia is a term that describes problems with balance, coordination, and speech. In genetic ataxias, these difficulties happen because of changes in certain genes that affect how the brain—especially a part called the cerebellum—functions. These conditions can run in families and usually develop slowly over time. Below are the types most commonly seen in **India**.

Friedreich's Ataxia (FRDA)

- *What is it?*

Friedreich's ataxia is one of the most frequent inherited ataxias in India. It is autosomal recessive, meaning a person must inherit the changed gene from both parents.

- *When do symptoms start?*

Usually during childhood or teenage years, but can appear later. The condition progresses slowly. With physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and regular heart check-ups, many patients maintain independence for years.

- *What are the common symptoms?*
 - Unsteady walking that gradually worsens
 - Difficulty coordinating hands and feet
 - Slurred speech
 - Curving of the spine (scoliosis)
 - Foot deformities
 - Fatigue
 - Sometimes heart-related issues

Spinocerebellar Ataxias (SCAs)

This is a group of inherited ataxias. Some types are more common in India due to regional patterns of inheritance.

- *What are the common types in India?*
 - SCA1
 - SCA2
 - SCA3 (also called Machado–Joseph Disease)
 - SCA12 – relatively more common in some North Indian communities, especially in the Baniya community.
- *What are the common symptoms?*
 - Gradual loss of balance
 - Trouble walking
 - Hand tremors or slowness of movement
 - Speech becoming slower or slurred
 - Eye movement problems
- *Symptoms usually develop in adulthood but can appear earlier depending on the type. Progression is slow, and supportive therapies help maintain mobility and daily functioning.*

Ataxia-Telangiectasia (A-T)

- *What is it?*

A-T is a rare childhood-onset condition caused by changes in the ATM gene.

- *What are the common symptoms?*
 - Early walking imbalance
 - Small red "spidery" veins on the eyes or skin (called telangiectasias)
 - Frequent chest infections
 - Difficulty with coordination
 - Sometimes tremors or involuntary movements

Children with A-T need regular monitoring of immunity, lungs, and nutrition. Supportive therapies help significantly with movement and speech.