



# SCLERODERMA FOUNDATION

SUPPORT • EDUCATION • RESEARCH  
DELAWARE VALLEY CHAPTER



## What Is Scleroderma?

**Scleroderma is** a chronic, often progressive, autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system attacks its own tissues. Symptoms may be visible, as when the skin is affected, or invisible, when only internal organs are affected. The symptoms of scleroderma vary greatly from individual to individual and the effects range from mild to severe. For some, scleroderma can be life threatening due to the severity of organ involvement.

## What Causes Scleroderma?

**The Exact Cause** of the disease is unknown. Scleroderma involves an overproduction of collagen and can cause thickening and tightening of the skin, and, in some cases, serious damage to internal organs including lungs, heart, kidneys, esophagus and the gastrointestinal tract. While there is no known cure, physicians can only treat troubling symptoms.

## Who has Scleroderma?

**Anyone can develop scleroderma.** Overall, females outnumber males, and the average patient is diagnosed in her 40's. It is a disease that affects how they live their daily lives. It is estimated that 300,000 people in the U.S. have some form of scleroderma.



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# LIVING WITH SCLERODERMA



*"It's a lot easier to talk with someone when they know what you're going through... You need someone to listen."*

Rafael Valentin

## Scleroderma Foundation is here to HELP! We have a support group area in your area.

Support groups are essential in helping people feel less alone when dealing with a chronic illness. Patients, families and friends can share feelings, coping strategies, personal experiences and knowledge in a supportive atmosphere.

Meetings are free. You will meet others looking for a place to be understood, be listened to in a friendly non-judgmental way and make friends with folks in your area that share similar experiences.

There is also an email support group for those who may not be able to attend regularly scheduled support group meetings.

Contact Colleen Ferara at [cferara@scleroderma.org](mailto:cferara@scleroderma.org) to join the email support group.

*"I read online that the average a person lives after being diagnosed was 5 years. I was an emotional mess! I joined a group online and one lady had scleroderma for over 30 years. She was my new best friend."*

## We have support groups located throughout Delaware, New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania.

Contact our office or visit our website for meeting times and locations.



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