

Focal Dystonia

Dystonia is a movement disorder causing the muscles to involuntarily spasm and contract. Opposing muscles will often contract simultaneously, just like as if they were trying to compete to control a specific body part. Involuntary muscle contractions force the body into repeated movements, as well as an irregular, awkward posture. Multiple forms of dystonia exist. Dozens of conditions and diseases can include dystonia as a symptom.

Dystonia can affect men, children and women of all backgrounds and ages. Estimates indicate that more than 300,000 people in North America alone are affected. It can cause varying degrees of pain and disability, ranging from mild to severe. Even though there isn't a cure presently, multiple treatment options exist and people around the world are trying to pursue research on various therapies for the condition.

Dystonia is a chronic condition, but the majority of dystonias don't impact intelligence, cognition or shorten the lifespan of the individual. The main exception to the rule is when dystonia occurs along with other symptoms for an injury or disease to the brain causing complications.

Focal Dystonia Anatomy

Focal dystonias tend to come on during adulthood. They affect a specific part of the body. Most of the time, focal dystonias are primary, which means that it is the only symptom neurologically present and they are presumed to have a genetic component to them, although there are cases of secondary dystonias as well. Focal dystonia can affect the muscles within the mouth, eye, vocal cords, feet, hands and neck.

How to Treat Focal Dystonia:

Even though there isn't a present cure for dystonia, multiple treatment options can be used. Since every person with dystonia is unique, the treatment plan needs to be customized according to the individual. No single strategy is going to work for every single case.

The main purpose of treating dystonia is to help minimize the amount of symptoms relating to pain, spasms and awkward posture. The end goal is to help improve your quality of living and allow you to function with the least amount of side effects possible. Establishing a plan of treatment requires patience and open communication with the physician.

The first step to treating the problem is to determine as much information as you can about the underlying cause. Someone who has focal dystonia will require different treatment than someone who is dealing with a dystonia that is attributed to a neurological disorder. Treatment options often include oral medication, surgery, injected medication, complementary therapies and non-drug therapies. Treating dystonia tends to be the most successful when the complete treatment plan includes the body, emotions and the spirit. The plan should address all of those different areas.

Tips:

- Suffering a stroke can cause focal dystonia
- A drug reaction could be directly related to focal dystonia
- Poisoning by carbon monoxide or lead has been shown to cause focal dystonia
- Being deprived of oxygen can lead to dystonia
- Primary dystonia tends to be inherited from one parent or the other