

Polymyalgia Rheumatica

Polymyalgia rheumatica is an inflammatory disorder that ends up resulting in stiffness and muscle pain in multiple joints in the body. The stiffness and pain will often occur in the shoulders, upper arms, hips and neck. Symptoms often begin within a couple of weeks. Most of those who develop this condition are older than 65 years of age. Those who are younger than 50 years old are rarely affected.

The term literally means poly = multiple, -myalgia = muscle pain, rheumatica = joint pain. Hence, multiple muscle and joint pains.

The main form of treatment is oral steroids such as prednisolone. Patients will often report a dramatic improvement in symptoms in just two weeks of taking prednisolone. Over the weeks, the dosage of steroid is reduced to allow the patient to come off it. Anti-inflammatory medications can help to improve the symptoms of the condition, but they require careful monitoring from your health care provider. The condition is related to another inflammatory disorder known as giant cell arteritis, which has been known to cause trouble with your vision, headaches, pain in the jaw and a number of other symptoms. It's possible to have both of the aforementioned conditions at the same time.

Diagnosis is key, and PMR usually occurs in women over 60 (but it is not uncommon to occur in men). Patients report aching and stiffness in several joints in the body, the worst being the hips and shoulders. Symptoms are usually bilaterally (i.e. both sides at the same time). Patients often report waking up with pain and stiffness in the morning.

Polymyalgia Rheumatica Anatomy

The muscular system controls the movement in the human body. Attached to the bones that make up the skeletal system, there are roughly 600 muscles that compose half of the individual's body weight. Each one of these muscles is a discrete organ constructed of blood vessels, tendons, muscle tissue and nerves. Muscle tissue is also found on the inside of the heart, the digestive organs and the blood vessels. In any of these organs, the muscles work to move substances throughout the entire body.

Most of the skeletal muscles are attached to two different bones using tendons. The tendons are a tough band of connective tissue with strong collagen fibers firmly attaching the bones to the muscles. Tendons are under a lot of stress when the muscles are pulling on them, so they are quite strong and are woven into the bone and muscle coverings.

How to Treat Polymyalgia Rheumatica:

1. Steroids

Polymyalgia rheumatic is often treated using a low dose of an oral steroid, such as prednisolone. Relief from stiffness and pain tends to occur within the first two to three days. If you aren't feeling better within a few days, you probably don't have this condition. Your response to treatment is one way that doctors are able to confirm a diagnosis.

2. Calcium and Vitamin D

Daily doses of Vitamin D and calcium will help to prevent osteoporosis brought on by going through corticosteroid treatments. Aim for 1,000-1,200 milligrams of calcium and 400-1,000 international units of Vitamin D.

3. Therapy

Although slow, and it won't cure the problem, therapy can provide significant joint relief over a few sessions. Range of mobility can also be improved and muscle spasm reduced. Osteopathy, physiotherapy and other forms of manual therapy can aid recovery, and reduce joint restriction and pain. Acupuncture can also be used for pain relief.

Tips:

- Eat a diet loaded with vegetables, fruits, low-fat meats, whole grains and make sure you get a balanced diet. Limit the amount of processed salt in your diet to make sure you don't increase the amount of fluid built up in your body and elevate your blood pressure. Look into an anti-inflammatory diet.
- Discuss an exercise regimen that will work for you to help maintain a healthy weight and strengthen muscles and bones.
- Use grocery carts, shower grab bars, reaching aids and other assistive devices to help make normal, everyday tasks simpler.
- Women are twice as likely to end up developing this disorder over their male counterparts.
- Northern European's are more likely to end up with the disease over other ethnicities.
- Look for supplements that reduce inflammation, such as those high in Omega 3 (fish oils, salmon, cod liver oil etc).