

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy/Chronic Regional Pain Syndrome

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Overview

Reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD), also known as the complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS), is an unusual chronic condition that primarily affects a person's arms or legs, and rarely the other parts of the body. It is believed that RSD arises as a result of central or peripheral nervous system disorders, and found more profoundly in women than men.

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Causes

The cause of Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy syndrome is implicit, and several reasons of its occurrence have been listed by the experts. Commonly, RSD begins after a serious injury or illness that didn't cause much damage to the nerves in your affected limb. Following may be some other causes:

- Irritation of the nervous tissues that affect the blood vessels and skin
- Trauma
- Surgery
- Heart disease
- Degenerative arthritis of the neck,
- Stroke or other brain diseases
- Nerve irritation by entrapment
- Shoulder and back problems
- Breast cancer
- Emotional stress (not a cause, but may worsen RSD)

In general, it is known that when the pain receptors in the affected area of the body start responding to catecholamine (fight-or-flight" hormones that are released by the adrenal glands in response to stress). The injury -based RSD may be due to the generation of immune response, which may cause inflammatory symptoms of redness, warmth, and swelling in the affected part.

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Symptoms

Following are the most recognizable symptoms of Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy, which may vary in severity and duration.

- Burning ache
- Swelling and bulging of the affected areas
- Sweating in the affected region
- Lack of ability to move the affected body part
- Muscle weakness
- Changes in nail and hair growth patterns, which may be fast growth or no growth at all
- Changes in the skin including skin color, temperature, and skin texture

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Diagnosis

Diagnosis of complex regional pain syndrome is nonspecific and may initiate with a physical exam and your medical history. However, there is no specific diagnostic test that can exactly diagnose complex regional pain syndrome, but the following procedures may be helpful:

- **Bone scan**
- **Sympathetic nervous system tests**
- **X-rays, MRI, and CT scanning methods**
- Radionuclide bone imaging (RNBI) provides extremely objective evidence to diagnose Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Treatment

Chronic pain treatment for complex regional pain syndrome when started early on can prove extremely effective in not only improving but also reducing the discomfort and irritation. If you are experiencing severe pain in any specific limb, you need to see a doctor and start your treatment immediately. Treatment includes:

- **Pain medication and Drug treatment** such as topical analgesics, narcotics, corticosteroids, antidepressants and anti-seizure drugs
- **Therapies**, which include heat & cold application, psychotherapy, physical therapy, and **Biofeedback**
- **Spinal cord stimulation** is a treatment involving the insertion of tiny electrodes along your spinal cord and passing gentle electric current to relieve ache
- **Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) treatment involves** applying electrical impulses to nerve endings
- **Sympathetic nerve-blocking medication involves** inserting an anesthetic next to the spine to directly block the affected nerves and ease the hurting

For more information please consult us at Pacific Pain Care Consultants

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Prevention

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy can be awfully painful and challenging. Therefore, try your best to prevent the condition from happening instead of curing it when it has. Here's what you can do:

- Pursue activities that you like and divert your attention from the pain
- Seek help and support in any way you can – friends, family, pain physician etc.
- Maintain your normal day tasks without taking stress and tension
- Relax yourself and rest when you really need it