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Polymyalgia Rheumatica

Two factors appear to be involved in the development of this condition:

- **Genetics.** Certain genes and gene variations may increase your susceptibility.
- **An environmental exposure.** New cases of polymyalgia rheumatica tend to come in cycles and may develop seasonally. This suggests that an environmental trigger, such as a virus, might play a role. But no specific virus has been shown to cause polymyalgia rheumatica.

Giant cell arteritis

Polymyalgia rheumatica and another disease known as giant cell arteritis share many similarities. Giant cell arteritis results in inflammation in the lining of arteries, most often the arteries located in the temples. Giant cell arteritis can cause headaches, jaw pain, vision problems and scalp tenderness. If left untreated, it can lead to stroke or blindness.

Polymyalgia rheumatica and giant cell arteritis may actually be the same disease but with different manifestations. The overlap between the two diseases is significant:

- About 20 percent of people with polymyalgia rheumatica also have signs and symptoms of giant cell arteritis.
- About half of the people with giant cell arteritis may also have polymyalgia rheumatica.

Risk factors

Risk factors for polymyalgia rheumatica include:

- **Age.** Polymyalgia rheumatica affects older adults almost exclusively. The average age at onset of the disease is 73.
- **Sex.** Women are about two times more likely to develop the disorder.
- **Race and geographic region.** Polymyalgia rheumatica is most common among whites in northern European populations.

Complications

Symptoms of polymyalgia rheumatica can greatly affect your ability to perform everyday activities. The pain and stiffness may contribute to difficulties with tasks such as the following:

- Getting out of bed, standing up from a chair or getting out of a car
- Bathing or combing your hair
- Getting dressed or putting on a coat

These difficulties can affect your health, social interactions, physical activity, sleep and general well-being.

In addition, people with polymyalgia rheumatica seem to be more likely to develop peripheral arterial disease.

How to Exercise for Polymyalgia Rheumatica

Today I have put together a short post about physical exercise, what you can do, what you should try to do, and what you should not do.

It also includes a brief portion about learning to de-stress with a simple breathing and relaxation method. As much as exercise is important so too is providing your body with opportunities to recover and relax.

With PMR its very important to bring stress levels down and remove as much stress from your environment as possible. Stress is not a great support element under any circumstances and does not fit well with Polymyalgia Rheumatica.

All stress reduction and minimization procedures have the technique of deep breathing as their basis. Some steps that are important to deep breathing exercises are relaxed and deep inhalations, which make full and expansive use

of the entire chest cavity stretching the muscles in the diaphragm to their fullest extent.

Try this lying down and while doing the slow breathing imagine your body completely relaxing, in all locations.

This is a good practise to do at various times in the day. Although you may be busy try to do a relaxing exercise for 5- 10 minutes very 2-3 hours.

Physical Exercise. When you begin an exercise system, remember that you have a disease and the body is fighting that disease. You must always listen to your body and never, never over do the exercise.

Always begin (and end) with flexibility or stretching exercises. If you are keen and feel up to it then Yoga and Tai chi are useful flexibility exercises. However for many just simple stretching exercises are extremely good.

For beginners use reach stretches and touch toe stretches. For more advanced try leg, arm, shoulder, neck, and back exercises to stretch and manage muscle flexibility.

The “use it or lose it” mantra definitely applies to muscle flexibility. To decrease daily joint stiffness and maintain or improve range of motion in joints, stretching is ideal.

And stretching muscles while they are warm reduces injury. However avoid the bounce when you hold a stretch, and always remember to stretch after finishing a workout.

If you are game and feel you can do this move to an aerobic exercise after stretches. Aerobic workouts require a high level of endurance. You should be able to exert yourself without becoming winded.

The lungs take in more oxygen, the heart pumps more blood to spread that oxygen throughout your body and the body converts the oxygen into energy more efficiently.

Getting your heart pumping may make you sweat, but the effort will reward you with improved metabolism, better mood, more energy, increased stamina, and, as studies show, decreased inflammation.

Useful aerobics exercise is cycling and or walking, and the best of all is aquatic exercise including swimming. However do not attempt high impact aerobics exercise or running.

If you are still keen try some muscular fitness exercises. Strength training makes your joints more stable. Strong muscles help keep bones positioned properly, and building muscle through weight-bearing exercise increases bone density, decreasing your risk for osteoporosis and fractures.

Lift light dumbbells or soup cans, use resistance bands or tubing, stand in a pool and push against water. Do slow, controlled movements, concentrating on proper form.

Do not over-train by lifting too much weight or performing too many repetitions or sets of exercises. Do not jerk weighted items quickly.

After warm down stretches a gentle massage to the muscular and lymphatic system enhances the detoxification of the muscular and other body tissues.

The relaxation of the muscular tissues and an increased circulation can be achieved through the application of gentle to strong heat on to the painful and affected regions of the body.

Remember to set realistic goals and listen to your body. Build your exercise routine slowly in five to 10-minute blocks of time, working up to 30 minutes total.

Exercise time is cumulative so you don't need to worry about doing it all at once. Three 10-minute sessions throughout the day are as effective as one 30-minute session.