

POLYMYALGIA RHEUMATICA (PMR)

What is Polymyalgia Rheumatica?

Polymyalgia rheumatica (PMR) is a vasculitic disorder involving pain and stiffness in the hip or shoulder area.

What causes PMR?

The cause of PMR is unknown, but it is not contagious.

Who gets PMR?

PMR occurs in about 50% of patients who have Giant cell arteritis (GCA). Close to 15% of patients with PMR develop GCA. There may be a common genetic link between the two disorders. PMR affects mostly older adults and is rarely diagnosed in people under 50 years old.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually include aching and morning stiffness in the shoulders, hips, neck and mid-body. These symptoms usually affect both sides of the body the same, although symptoms may be stronger on one side than the other.

Other symptoms may include general tiredness, weakness, weight loss and a low fever. Some patients develop swelling or fluid retention (edema) of the hands, wrists, ankles and top of the feet.

How is PMR diagnosed?

There is no specific test for PMR. To make a diagnosis, doctors use a checklist of a certain group of symptoms and laboratory characteristics. The key laboratory finding in PMR is an elevation in the erythrocyte sedimentation rate.

What is the prognosis?

PMR usually resolves by itself in 1-4 years, even when not treated. Symptoms diminish greatly with treatment. Most patients need steroid treatment for one or more years.

What is the treatment?

Treatment often starts with steroids. Patients usually respond quickly. The dose is increased if the symptoms are not controlled within one week.

The effective steroid dose is maintained for 2-4 weeks after the inflammatory symptoms have stopped. The dose is then gradually lowered and stopped, with careful monitoring for return of symptoms.

Return of symptoms (relapse) occurs in as many as 25-50% of patients. Relapse is more likely to occur if the steroid dose is lowered too quickly.

What is Vasculitis?

Vasculitis is an inflammation of the blood vessels, arteries, veins or capillaries. Vasculitis is a family of diseases. The cause of vasculitis is unknown, but through research and treatment, outcomes have improved significantly over the past 20 years.

Continued research is essential for further advances in these diseases, which can be life-threatening.

About the Vasculitis Foundation

The Vasculitis Foundation (VF) is the largest international patient support group for people with vasculitis.

Through its website, newsletter, brochures, informational materials, medical consultants, symposia and chapters, VF raises awareness and educates its patients, family members and friends.



Support

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www.VasculitisFoundation.org

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