

Polymyalgia rheumatica is a rare inflammatory disease characterized by muscle pain (myalgia), stiffness, and additional generalized systemic symptoms such as fatigue, low-grade fever, and/or a general feeling of ill health (malaise). Polymyalgia rheumatica can be a relatively benign condition that is extremely responsive to treatment. In some rare cases, permanent muscle weakness, degeneration and loss (atrophy) of muscle mass, and disability may occur. The exact cause of polymyalgia rheumatica is unknown, although immunological factors and familial tendencies (genetic predisposition) have been mentioned in the medical literature. The diagnosis of polymyalgia rheumatica may be confirmed by a thorough clinical examination including a detailed patient history and specialized blood testing that demonstrates an abnormally elevated sedimentation rate. Other substances in the blood, such as serum albumin, globulins, and fibronogen, may also be elevated. Microscopic and laboratory examination of muscle tissue samples (biopsy) from affected individuals does not usually reveal any muscle abnormality. Some people with this disorder may also be anemic. Rheumatoid factor is not present in the blood of people with this disorder.