Treatment for McArdle Disease

McArdle disease is a rare muscle disorder. Muscle cells can't store energy well. Energy in muscles is stored as glycogen. McArdle disease is one of a group of diseases called glycogen storage diseases. The symptoms often show up in childhood. But some people aren't diagnosed until later as an adult.

Types of treatment

There is no cure for McArdle disease. Diet and exercise changes can help control it. A low- or moderate-intensity exercise routine may help. This lets your body get the most out of your ability to use glucose. It is very important to work with your healthcare team to create an exercise plan. Getting too much exercise can harm your muscles and kidneys. Your care plan may also include:

- Carefully watching how many carbohydrates you eat
- Eating or drinking certain amounts of sugar before exercise
- Light exercise, but not intense exercise
- Following a safe, moderate aerobic exercise plan
- Taking creatine supplements
- A diet high in carbohydrates
- Taking other medicines, such as ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitors
- Not taking certain medicines, such as statins

Possible complications of McArdle disease

People with this disease are at risk for muscle tissue decay after a lot of physical activity. This is called rhabdomyolysis. When muscle tissue decays, it often releases myoglobin. This can cause dark brownish-red urine (myoglobinuria). This may lead to kidney failure in some people. Other possible complications of McArdle disease include:

- Permanent muscle weakness (rare)
- Higher risk for problems from general anesthesia
- Higher risk for problems from cholesterol-lowering medicines (statins)

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have:

- Symptoms that get worse
- New symptoms

Center for Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolism
4650 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90027 | CHLA.org/URL