

# Treating Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)



Treatment for complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS) starts with therapy that teaches you ways to move the affected body part. But if your pain prevents this therapy, you may have other treatment first. The sooner you get any type of treatment, the more likely you are to get better.

## Physical, occupational, and hand therapy

Physical, occupational, and hand therapy aim to improve movement, build strength, and reduce pain. Which therapy you have depends on which part of your body is affected by reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD). The goal of therapy is to help you learn ways to use the affected part as normally as possible. For instance, if RSD affects your leg and foot, you may work with a therapist to walk more. Or if you've lost some hand or arm use, you may learn exercises to regain some of that function.

Treatment also may include desensitization. This includes rubbing different textures on the injured part. Heat or cold also may be used. Treatment can help you get used to things touching your hand or foot. This may help reduce pain in the long term.

## Medical treatment

Your healthcare provider may advise certain treatments for your symptoms. The goal is to reduce your pain and to get you moving again. Treatment may include:

- Medicines taken by mouth to ease nerve pain (such as gabapentin). Or medicines to reduce sympathetic nerve activity such as phenoxybenzamine. Bisphosphonates have also been shown to help pain.
- Corticosteroids and other anti-inflammatory medicines
- Lidocaine patches or other topical medicines
- Nerve blocks to stop pain signals
- Spinal cord stimulators to send electrical signals that block pain
- Sympathectomy to destroy an autonomic nerve that might add to the pain. This is done either by chemical injection or surgery.
- Electroacupuncture to help treat early, mild cases
- Botulinum toxin shots in some cases
- Treatment of depression or other mental health disorders in some cases

## Other treatment

CRPS is complex and painful. You may feel depressed or angry about having it. Psychological therapy and CRPS support groups may help you deal with those feelings. Other treatment also may help you cope. Biofeedback, for instance, can make you more aware of your body's pain signals. This may help you learn how to control pain and the stress it may cause.

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