

THE BASICS OF MYOSITIS

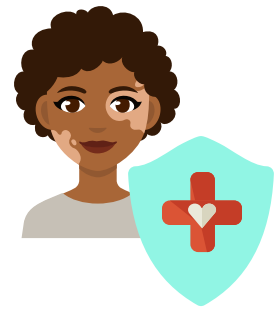
Myositis is the term for illnesses that involve chronic muscle inflammation.
(*"myo" means muscle and "itis" means inflammation*)

"Myositis" refers to several different illnesses including polymyositis, dermatomyositis and inclusion body myositis.

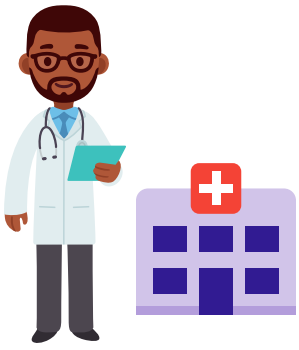
All forms of myositis involve chronic or persistent muscle inflammation. This muscle inflammation almost always results in weakness and pain of the muscles. Myositis can affect many parts of the body. Sometimes the joints, heart, lungs, intestines, and skin can become inflamed.



Some forms of myositis like dermatomyositis (*"dermato" refers to the skin*) result in particular rashes over the knuckles, around the eyes, or sometimes in other parts of the body. Other forms of myositis occur in children. Some forms are seen with other connective tissues diseases like lupus or rheumatoid arthritis.



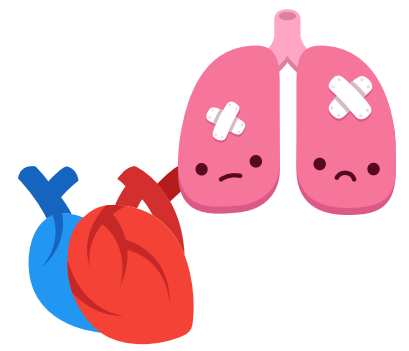
At present there is no cure and myositis is unlikely to go away on its own. But, with proper treatment and management, these chronic diseases can be brought under control.



A person with myositis will need to manage the condition and to adjust to the changes it brings. This may involve continuing to take medicine and seeing a doctor regularly. It may also require changing some activities especially during periods of increased pain and weakness.



Myositis is more serious if it affects the breathing muscles, the heart, is combined with a tumor, or if certain autoantibodies are present.



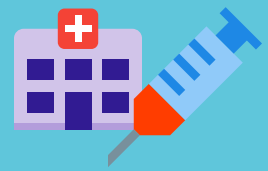
Because myositis closely resembles many other diseases, and differs so much from person to person, it can be difficult to diagnose. A doctor may have to perform many tests and see a patient many times before deciding on a diagnosis of myositis. A doctor will ask a series of questions about the problems the patient is experiencing and will perform a physical examination.



One of the most useful exams is a blood test for a muscle enzyme called creatine kinase or CK. In most people with active myositis, the CK level in the blood is abnormally high.

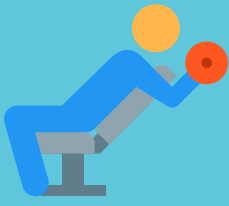


Another useful procedure is an electromyogram (EMG). It measures the electrical pattern of the muscles just as an electrocardiogram (EKG) measures the electrical pattern of the heart.



A doctor will probably also request that a muscle biopsy be done. This is the removal of a small piece of muscle for staining and examination with a microscope to see how the muscle fibers are damaged.

There are many forms of treatment for myositis but most include exercise, physical therapy, medications, and rest.



Exercise



Physical Therapy



Medications



Rest

Myositis is a rare disease. In the United States, it is estimated that each year five to 10 out of every one million people get one of the forms of myositis.



Although myositis can affect people of any age, most children who get the disease are between 5 and 15 years of age, and most adults are between 30 and 60.



As scientists get closer to understanding the process leading to muscle damage in the different forms of myositis, they can hope to find new ways of stopping the harmful actions. **With the scientific progress that has been made in recent years people with myositis have reason to share that hope.**

