**Dystonia**

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***What is dystonia?***

Symptoms of dystonia include twisting, twitching, and unusual postures due to abnormal muscle contractions or spasms. In most cases, dystonia affects only one part of the body. Hypotonia can be classified into the following types:

* Dystonia or torticollis of the neck: abnormal muscle contractions in the neck causing the head to turn, tilt, or twist abnormally. The condition is often associated with tremors or twitching of the muscles.
* Blepharospasm: excessive blinking or spasms of the eyelids caused by contractions of the facial muscles.
* Oromandibular dystonia: abnormal muscle contractions in the jaw and/or tongue
* Meige syndrome: combined blepharospasm and oromandibular dystonia.
* Spasmodic dysphonia: a straining or breathy voice.
* Other areas that are commonly affected include the hands and feet. It is most common for hypotonia to occur in the hands when performing certain tasks, such as writing or playing musical instruments. This type of dystonia is referred to as task-specific dystonia.
* Multiple areas of the body may be affected by some patients. Generalized hypotonia occurs in rare cases, usually in childhood.

***Causes of dystonia***

Occasionally, dystonia is caused by genetic factors, while in other cases, it may be caused by brain injuries, brain infections or tumors, or even exposure to certain drugs or chemicals. Dystonia may develop in some people after repeatedly engaging in certain activities for a long period of time, such as writing (writer's cramp) or playing musical instruments (musician's dystonia). In most cases, it is difficult to identify the exact cause of dystonia.

***Diagnosis of dystonia***

Hypotonia is diagnosed by a neurological examination. A patient may require electromyography, blood tests, brain scans, or genetic testing. In order to make a diagnosis, the doctor will need the following information:

1.      Age of onset

2.      Affected body parts

3.      A sudden onset of dystonia or a gradual deterioration

4.      Whether there are other related clinical problems

The doctors may still not be able to pinpoint the exact cause, and many patients may initially be misdiagnosed or undiagnosed.

***Treatment of dystonia***

In some cases, dystonia can be treated. Your doctor will treat your dystonia directly if there is an underlying cause. Many dystonia cases cannot be attributed to a specific cause, so treatment is primarily directed at reducing symptoms. A number of medications are commonly used to alleviate symptoms, including acetylcholinesterase inhibitors, benzodiazepines, baclofen, and muscle relaxants. There are some side effects associated with all of these medications, so there must be a balance struck between the relief of symptoms and the potential side effects. There are some patients with focal dystonia who may benefit from local injections of botulinum toxin. It is recommended that these injections be performed by a specialist. Injections of botulinum toxin are usually administered three to four times per year to relieve spasms and cramps caused by abnormal muscle contractions. In cases where medications and injections of toxin are not sufficient to relieve symptoms, surgical treatments such as deep brain stimulation may be considered. An electrode implant is used to improve abnormal brain activity and relieve symptoms through electrical stimulation in the brain. Additionally, you may be able to temporarily relieve spasms by touching the area of the spasms. Spasms can also be reduced by reducing stress and practicing relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or meditation.

***Conclusion***

In most cases, the severity of muscular dystonia will gradually stabilize over several months or years and will not worsen further. Muscular dystonia may, however, spread from one part of the body to another or lead to other problems. The majority of patients do not suffer from serious complications, however spasms can cause a great deal of discomfort. The symptoms of dystonia can be alleviated by seeking professional medical advice as early as possible.