

What is Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome (CRPS/RSD)?

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS), also called Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome (RSD) is a chronic neurological disease affecting an estimated 1.5 to more than 6 million Americans.

CRPS/RSD is a malfunction of part of the nervous system and the immune system as they respond to tissue damage from trauma, such as an accidental injury or medical procedure. Even a minor injury, such as a sprain or deep bruise, might trigger CRPS/RSD causing nerves to misfire, sending constant pain signals to the brain.

The term Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) was adopted by the International Association for the Study of Pain to define two kinds of CRPS.

CRPS Type I (RSD) is characterized by

- The presence of an initiating event or injury, such as a sprain or fracture
- Continuing pain, including allodynia (pain resulting from a stimulus that normally does not cause pain, such as the touch of clothing or a light breeze); the pain is out of proportion to that associated with the original injury
- Evidence at some time of edema (swelling), changes in skin blood flow, skin color changes, skin temperature

changes greater than 1° C or abnormal sweating in the region of pain

- This diagnosis is excluded by the existence of conditions that would otherwise account for the degree of pain and dysfunction

CRPS Type II (Causalgia) is characterized by

- The presence of continuing pain including allodynia (pain resulting from a stimulus that normally does not cause pain, like the touch of clothing or a light breeze); the pain is out of proportion to that associated with the original injury; or hyperalgesia (heightened sensitivity to painful stimulation) after an identifiable nerve injury, not necessarily limited to the distribution of the injured nerve
- This diagnosis is excluded by the existence of conditions that would otherwise account for the degree of pain and dysfunction.

Symptoms of both (any combination)

- Pain: constant, moderate to severe
- Muscle spasm, loss of motion and use of the affected area
- Swelling that may come and go
- Skin Changes: Color, dryness, excessive sweating, excessive or decreased hair growth, changes in the nails

- Circulatory changes: cold or hot in the affected areas
- Insomnia and depression due to the other symptoms and life changes

Who can get CRPS/RSD?

Anybody! Anyone can get CRPS/RSD at any age, but studies show that it is more common in people between the ages of 25 and 55, and is more frequently seen in women than in men. It used to be considered rare in children, but there has been a recent increase in the number of cases among adolescents and young adults.

CRPS/RSD is a physical disease

CRPS/RSD is a physical disease. The symptoms may be caused by conditions that are not easily seen, prompting others to say, "But you look so well."

Diagnosis

A physician must make a clinical diagnosis of CRPS/RSD using a patient history, a thorough examination, and the results of numerous tests. There is no single test for CRPS/RSD.

Early diagnosis and treatment with pain control, physical therapy, and counseling offer the highest probability of remission from CRPS/RSD.

Treatment

Treatments may include a wide variety of medications, nerve blocks, physical therapy, and psychological support for people with CRPS/RSD as well as for friends and family. Occasionally, surgical procedures are needed to control pain and abnormal nervous system responses. Treatment is individualized. Each patient should have a treatment plan that includes pain control, psychological support, and physical and occupational therapy.

If you think you have CRPS/RSD

If you have an injury that isn't healing as it should - if the pain or swelling is more severe than you expect for such an injury . . .

- Ask your doctor if this could be CRPS/RSD
- Make sure that you are getting treatment for the pain
- Try to keep the affected area moving
- Get another medical opinion if you feel that your physician isn't taking your complaints seriously.

Is there a cure?

No, but there is hope! Advances in research on pain and CRPS/RSD have helped find some new and effective treatments. More money and more research is needed to achieve the goals of understanding the causes of CRPS/RSD, finding

effective treatments for those living with CRPS/RSD, and preventing the development of CRPS/RSD after injury and tissue damage.

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Association of America (RSDSA) promotes public and professional awareness of CRPS/RSD. It educates those afflicted with the syndrome, their families, friends, insurance companies, healthcare providers, and others. RSDSA encourages those with CRPS/RSD to offer emotional support to others through affiliated support groups. RSDSA is committed to raising funds for research to find the causes and cures for CRPS/RSD.

For more information on CRPS/RSD, joining RSDSA, or making a donation, please contact our office or visit our website.

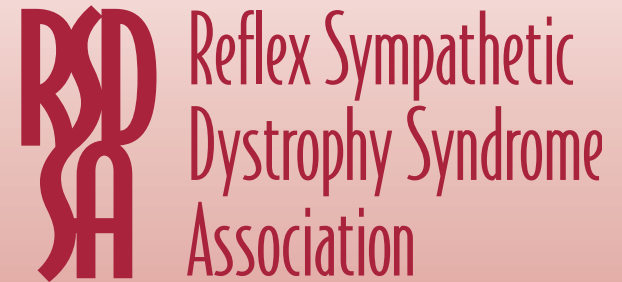
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Raising awareness of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) and Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD) since 1984.



Recognizing, Understanding, and Treating CRPS/RSD

**A potentially disabling,
chronic neurologic syndrome**

also known as:

CRPS

RSD

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