

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) of the Foot

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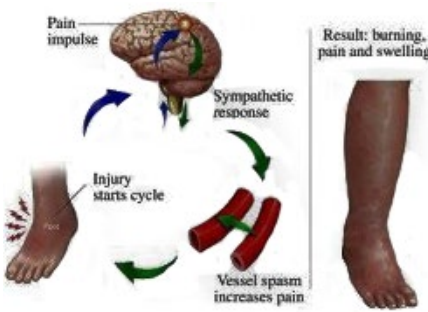
What It Is, Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment

What Is Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)?

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) is a chronic pain condition that often affects one limb, such as a foot, following an injury, surgery or trauma. It is characterized by prolonged pain and inflammation that is disproportionate to the original injury. CRPS can be challenging to diagnose and manage due to its complex nature.



Causes of CRPS



The exact cause of CRPS is not fully understood, but it often occurs after:

- **Trauma or injury**, such as fractures, sprains, or surgery.
- **Nerve damage** in the affected foot.
- **Immune system dysfunction**, leading to an exaggerated inflammatory response.
- Rarely, CRPS can develop without any known injury.

Symptoms of CRPS

CRPS symptoms can vary in severity and may include:

1. **Chronic pain** that is burning, throbbing, or stabbing in nature.
2. **Swelling** in the affected foot or ankle.
3. **Temperature and color changes** in the skin (warm, red, or cool, blue).
4. **Sensitivity to touch** or light pressure (allodynia).
5. **Limited range of motion** and stiffness in the foot or toes.
6. **Skin changes**, such as shiny or thin skin.



Stages of CRPS

CRPS typically progresses through three stages if left untreated:

1. **Acute Stage:** Pain, swelling, and redness.
2. **Dystrophic Stage:** Muscle wasting, stiff joints, and skin changes.

3. **Atrophic Stage:** Permanent damage, including bone and skin degeneration.

Diagnosing CRPS

CRPS is diagnosed through:

- **Medical history** and physical examination.
- **Imaging tests**, such as bone scans, X-rays, or MRI, to assess changes in bone and tissue.
- **Exclusion of other conditions**, such as arthritis or neuropathy.



Treatment Options for CRPS

Managing CRPS often requires a multidisciplinary approach:

1. **Medications**
 - Pain relievers, such as NSAIDs or stronger analgesics for severe cases.
 - Neuropathic pain medications, such as gabapentin or amitriptyline.
 - Corticosteroids to reduce inflammation.
2. **Physical Therapy**
 - Gradual exercises to improve mobility and strength in the affected foot.
3. **Nerve Blocks and Injections**
 - Local anesthetic injections to block pain signals.
4. **Psychological Support**
 - Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to manage pain perception and emotional distress.
5. **Advanced Treatments**
 - **Spinal Cord Stimulation:** Devices implanted to modulate pain signals.
 - **Ketamine Infusions:** Used in some cases to manage severe, refractory CRPS.



Preventing CRPS

- Early mobilization and rehabilitation after an injury or surgery.
- Prompt treatment of any injuries or nerve issues.
- Regular follow-ups with healthcare providers to monitor recovery.

Conclusion

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) of the foot is a debilitating condition that requires early

recognition and comprehensive care. With timely intervention, many patients can achieve improved function and reduced pain. If you or someone you know experiences prolonged foot pain after an injury, consult a healthcare provider to explore treatment options.