

Patient Information for Dermatomyositis

Overview

Dermatomyositis is an inflammatory disease that causes muscle weakness and skin rashes.

Who's At Risk

Dermatomyositis is a rare disease that is more common in women than in men. Adults most often develop dermatomyositis between the ages of 45 and 60. There is also a childhood form of the disease called juvenile dermatomyositis.

Signs & Symptoms

A violet rash develops, most commonly on your face and eyelids. The rash can also appear on your knuckles, chest, knees, nails, and back. The purple, patchy rash is often the first sign of dermatomyositis.

Dermatomyositis also causes muscle weakness that tends to start in the trunk area, such as your hips, shoulders, neck, upper arms, and thighs. The weakness tends to get gradually worse.

Self-Care Guidelines

The rash is sensitive to the sun. Avoid too much exposure to the sun and wear protective clothing and SPF 45 or higher sunscreen.

For support groups, see the Myositis Association website at <http://www.myositis.org/your-myositis-community/support-groups>.

When to Seek Medical Care

There is no cure for dermatomyositis. However, the sooner treatment is started, the better the results. It is important to keep in touch with your doctors during treatment.

Treatments Your Physician May Prescribe

Corticosteroids (prednisone) are effective in controlling dermatomyositis symptoms. However, they have side effects after prolonged use. Corticosteroid-sparing agents can be used to reduce the dosage and side effects of corticosteroids.

If the rash is severe, antimalarial medication can be administered.

Physical and speech therapy can help you improve your muscle strength.

Depending on your symptoms, there may be other options you will want to discuss with your health care provider. Your doctors will tailor individual treatment to you.