

Contact Us Toll Free at 1.866.208.3430

Spasticity

Overview

Spasticity is a term referring to muscle stiffness or tightness. Although it usually occurs in the legs, spasticity can affect any muscle. In patients with Multiple Sclerosis, spasticity can range from mild tightness to extremely painful muscle spasms.

Triggers

Spasticity can be brought on by many triggers, including:

- Sudden position changes or body movements
- Tightness of other muscles
- Hot or cold temperatures
- Illness or infection
- Humidity
- Tight clothing

Avoiding these known triggers can help minimize the occurrence of spasticity.

Consequences

The two main consequences of spasticity are frozen or immobilized joints (known as contractures) and bed sores. These consequences can lead to disability or further medical problems. It is important to use medication, exercise, and stretching to treat spasticity and avoid these serious consequences.

Treating Spasticity

Each case of spasticity is unique. Therefore, managing spasticity requires unique regimens for each patient. Regular exercise and daily stretching may help some patients reduce spasticity and maintain range of motion. If patients need to take medicine to treat spasticity, there are two main antispasticity medications currently available:

- Baclofen relaxes muscles by affecting nerves in the spinal cord. The benefits of baclofen are that it can be taken by mouth or by an implanted pump (intrathecal baclofen), and that it is well-studied for treating spasticity caused by MS. The drawback of baclofen is that it may cause drowsiness or a feeling of muscle weakness.
- Tizanidine (Zanaflex) is an alternative to baclofen that is also regularly used to treat spasticity in patients with MS. The benefits of tizanidine are that it acts very quickly to stop spasticity and provide relief, and that it will not cause a feeling of muscle weakness. The drawbacks of tizanidine are that it causes dry mouth and sedation, and that in rare cases it may lower blood pressure.

Some other medications may be used in specific cases of spasticity. These medications include diazepam (Valium), dantrolene (Dantrium), and even botulinum toxin (Botox). However, no medication can cure spasticity. It can only prevent the symptoms of spasticity from occurring. Spasticity affects many patients with MS. It is important to treat spasticity to avoid the potential consequences that may occur if spasticity is left untreated. Patients with MS should talk to their doctor or Patient Care Coordinator about activities and medications that can help manage spasticity.

For questions or concerns regarding any of the above statements or recommendations, please feel free to contact Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy Toll Free at 1.866.208.3430.