

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 (MS), 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 resulting from being immobilized. These consequences can lead to disability or further medical problems. The use of exercise, stretching, and medication may help avoid these serious consequences.

Treating Spasticity

Each case of spasticity is unique. Therefore, managing spasticity requires regimens individualized 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, two commonly prescribed options are baclofen and tizanidine.

- Baclofen relaxes muscles by affecting nerves in the spinal cord. Baclofen can be taken by mouth or given through an implanted pump (intrathecal baclofen) that is well-studied for treating spasticity caused by MS. However, baclofen 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. Tizanidine acts very quickly to stop spasticity and provide relief and is not associated with feelings of muscle weakness. However, tizanidine may cause dry mouth and sedation, and in rare cases may lower blood pressure.

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 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.