

# Unveiling the Complexities of Polymyalgia Rheumatica: Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Management

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## Introduction

Polymyalgia Rheumatica (PMR) is a chronic inflammatory condition that primarily affects older adults, typically those over the age of 50. This autoimmune disorder is characterized by widespread pain and stiffness, particularly in the shoulders, neck, hips, and thighs. PMR can significantly impact a person's quality of life, causing discomfort and limitations in mobility. The exact cause of PMR remains unknown, but genetic predisposition and environmental factors are believed to play a role in its development.

## Description

One of the hallmark symptoms of PMR is morning stiffness, which can be severe and last for several hours. This stiffness often affects both sides of the body symmetrically and may gradually improve throughout the day. Alongside stiffness, individuals with PMR may experience muscle pain, weakness, fatigue, and a general feeling of malaise. These symptoms can be debilitating, making everyday tasks such as getting dressed or climbing stairs challenging.

Diagnosing PMR can be complex, as its symptoms overlap with those of other conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia. Healthcare providers typically rely on a combination of clinical evaluation, blood tests, and imaging studies to make a diagnosis. Blood tests may reveal elevated levels of inflammatory markers, such as C-Reactive Protein (CRP) and Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate (ESR), which are indicative of active inflammation in the body. Imaging studies, such as ultrasound or Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), may also be used to assess for inflammation in the affected joints and surrounding tissues.

Once diagnosed, the mainstay of treatment for PMR is corticosteroid therapy. Corticosteroids, such as prednisone or prednisolone, work by suppressing inflammation and alleviating

symptoms. However, long-term use of corticosteroids can lead to adverse effects, such as osteoporosis, diabetes, and increased susceptibility to infections. Therefore, healthcare providers often prescribe the lowest effective dose of corticosteroids for the shortest duration possible.

In addition to medication, lifestyle modifications can also help manage PMR symptoms and improve overall well-being. Regular exercise, such as walking or swimming, can help improve joint flexibility and strength, while also reducing stiffness and pain. A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can support overall health and may help reduce inflammation in the body. Furthermore, getting an adequate amount of rest and practicing stress-reduction techniques, such as meditation or deep breathing exercises, can help manage fatigue and improve sleep quality.

In some cases, PMR may resolve on its own within a few years, while others may experience recurrent flare-ups requiring ongoing treatment. It is essential for individuals with PMR to work closely with their healthcare providers to monitor their symptoms and adjust their treatment plan as needed. Additionally, participating in support groups or connecting with others who have PMR can provide valuable emotional support and practical advice for managing the condition.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, polymyalgia rheumatica is a chronic inflammatory condition that primarily affects older adults, causing widespread pain and stiffness in the shoulders, neck, hips, and thighs. While PMR can be challenging to diagnose and manage, with appropriate treatment and lifestyle modifications, individuals with PMR can experience relief from their symptoms and maintain a good quality of life. By working closely with healthcare providers and adopting healthy habits, individuals with PMR can effectively manage their condition and enjoy an active and fulfilling life.