



PMR and You

A guide to
understanding polymyalgia
rheumatica (PMR)

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What is PMR?

Polymyalgia rheumatica, or PMR, is an inflammatory rheumatic disease. Rheumatic diseases are diseases that cause your body to attack your:

Joints

Muscles

Bones

Organs

PMR is a common inflammatory rheumatic disease that starts in the **large joints of the shoulders, hips, and neck**

How common is PMR?

PMR is the **second most common** inflammatory rheumatic disease after rheumatoid arthritis, or RA.

PMR incidence

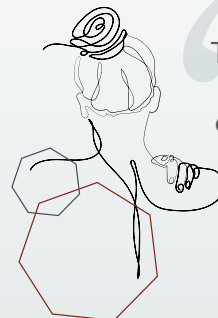
~1 out of every 2,000 people aged 50 years and older are diagnosed with PMR.

PMR and gender

Women are affected 2-3 times more than men.

PMR and age

People aged 50 years or older have a greater risk of developing PMR.



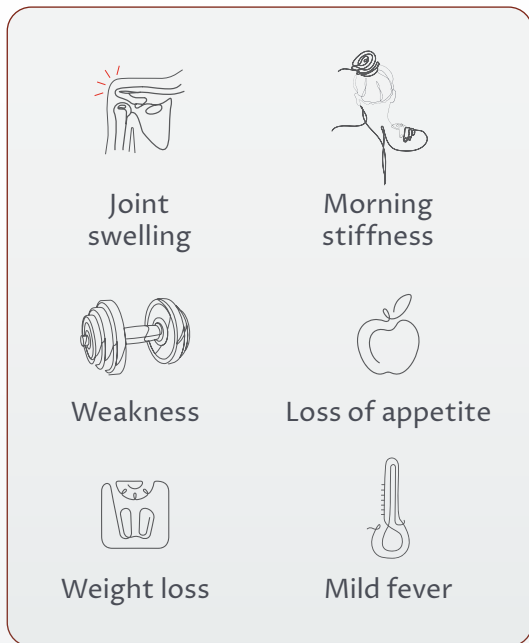
“The pain was excruciating—
I got to my primary care
doctor as quickly as I could.”

—a real person with PMR”

What are the symptoms of PMR?

Pain and stiffness in the hips and shoulders on both sides of the body are the most common symptoms of PMR.

Other symptoms of PMR may include:



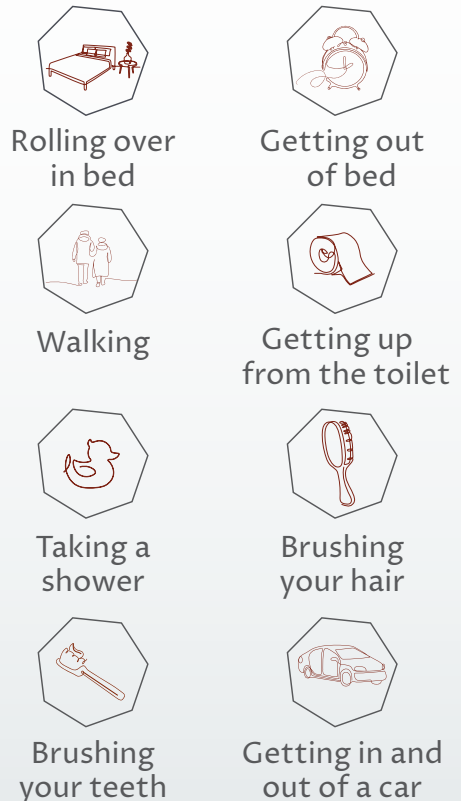
PMR pain can change from day to day. Some days you might feel fine. Other days you might feel surprised by what you *can't* do with your body. You may have first felt PMR pain out of nowhere one day, or it could have grown over time.

Living with PMR can be difficult







There are many symptoms that can make daily living hard.

PMR pain may disrupt your sleep. This can make you feel tired during the day. For many people, PMR pain and stiffness can feel worse in the morning.

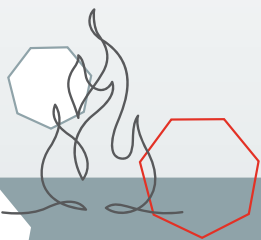
PMR may make it feel impossible to do the tasks that you once found easy, such as:



What is the connection between PMR and inflammation?

-  Your immune system isn't working like it should
-  Your body thinks it's under attack
-  Your body tries to fend off the attack with inflammatory proteins
-  Interleukin-6, or IL-6, is a common protein seen in PMR
-  People with PMR have high levels of IL-6 in their body
-  High IL-6 levels may cause you to feel pain, stiffness, and fatigue

PMR symptoms may go away with the help of steroids, other medications, or even on their own. If they come back, this is known as a **flare**.



PMR may also impact your mood



Nearly 1 out of 3 people with PMR have reported having depression.



It's important to talk to your doctor about how you're feeling. **You are not alone, and your doctor can provide resources and support to help you.**



The PMR treatment journey

How is PMR diagnosed?

If you haven't been able to get relief from your pain, **talk to your primary care doctor**. They can help find out if your pain is caused by PMR.

Your primary care doctor may also refer you to a **rheumatologist**, who can diagnose and treat your PMR. A rheumatologist is a doctor who specializes in treating inflammatory rheumatic diseases.

PMR can be hard to diagnose because it causes symptoms that are similar to other conditions.



To find out if PMR is the source of your pain, your rheumatologist may do certain tests, including:



Physical exam:

Looks at how you sit, stand, walk, and move your arms



Blood test:

Looks for inflammation in your body



Imaging tests:

Look at the amount of joint damage in your shoulders and hips

It might be overwhelming to find out that you have PMR. The sooner you have a diagnosis, the sooner your doctor can figure out a **treatment plan that may help you feel better**.

How is PMR treated?

It's important for you to take an active role in your treatment plan. Treatment is more successful when you work with your doctor.

Every person's PMR experience is different

1. Talk to your healthcare team about your symptoms
2. Make sure you share your health history
3. Partner with your healthcare provider to create a treatment plan that works for you

Standard of care for PMR begins with glucocorticoids (GCs). Low-to-moderate dosages of GCs have quickly helped PMR symptoms.

How do steroids work?

Steroids may provide relief by reducing the inflammation that causes your pain and stiffness. Your doctor will slowly lower your dose of steroids over time as you start to feel better.

The long-term use of GCs can be associated with the following:



Heart disease



Osteoporosis
(bone density disease)



Diabetes

For some people, symptoms can return if your steroid treatment dose is too low or you stop taking them. The goal of a steroid treatment plan is to relieve your symptoms and then to slowly lower the dose without PMR pain or stiffness returning.

Building your support system

Understanding your PMR diagnosis can feel like a lot. It's important to have a support system of people to help you understand your diagnosis.

Steps to help build your support team

1. **Share your diagnosis** to let the people who care about you know how they can help.
2. **Tell your friends, family, and loved ones** how PMR is affecting you.
3. **Ask a loved one if they can support you** on your PMR journey as your caregiver.
4. **Don't be afraid to ask for help** with things like getting out of bed or getting a ride to your doctor's office.

Having a support team to lift you up when you're feeling down can make living with PMR feel less challenging.

Seek support for living with PMR

PMR can make you feel like you're alone. **You don't have to go through this journey on your own.**

Here are organizations with more information about PMR.*

Arthritis Foundation

Dedicated to the prevention, control, and cure of arthritis and other inflammatory rheumatic diseases, including PMR.

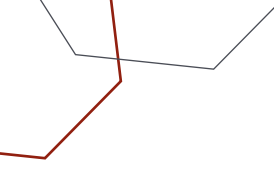
Vasculitis Foundation

Helps patients by providing information and promoting research efforts for the family of vasculitis diseases, including PMR.

Stay Positive

Talk with your doctors to get the answers you need about your PMR diagnosis and treatment plan.

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