

What are attacks of palindromic rheumatism like?

Attacks usually start in one or two joints, often the hands, which quickly become painful, stiff and swollen. Other areas around the affected joints, such as the tendons, may also become painful and swollen. Attacks are sometimes called flares or flare-ups.

Attacks can move from joint to joint, and usually last for a few days. Eventually the attack stops, and your joints and tendons will return to normal. People with palindromic rheumatism normally feel well between attacks.

Some people feel very tired after having an attack. This is known as fatigue. This fatigue can last for a few days or weeks and might affect you physically. It can also affect your concentration and motivation.

Attacks of palindromic rheumatism come and go. But the pattern of attacks – how often they happen, how long they last and what joints they involve – is different for everyone. Some people have less than one attack a year, while others have more than once a week.

What is palindromic rheumatism?

Palindromic rheumatism is a form of inflammatory arthritis. It causes attacks or flare-ups of joint pain and inflammation that come and go. The joints look and feel normal between attacks. It's sometimes known as palindromic arthritis.

Symptoms

People with palindromic rheumatism usually have no symptoms between attacks. This is different from other types of inflammatory arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis, as people with these conditions will have joint problems most of the time.

During an attack of palindromic rheumatism, the joints involved – and the tendons and area around them – will feel painful and stiff and may look swollen. They might also feel tender and hot, and the skin over your joints may look red.

Palindromic Rheumatism

Flare

Self-management

Patient Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU)

your skin. Relaxation exercises can also help.

Once the inflammation has settled down, you should start to get moving again by doing gentle exercise.

If you have noticed that your attacks are becoming more frequent or there is a change in symptom severity, you may need to contact the rheumatology nurse specialist to see if you need to review your medication.



Some people have attacks that last just a few hours, while some people's last for several days. Palindromic rheumatism doesn't usually affect parts of the body outside the joints and tendons. However, some people might also have a fever during an attack or develop nodules under the skin, near the affected joints.

Medication

The main treatment for Palindromic Rheumatism flares are drugs to reduce pain and inflammation.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs

(NSAIDs): These drugs block inflammation and help reduce symptoms of the flare. Although NSAIDs do help with symptoms, they are not a long-lasting fix and may have to be taken regularly. Some NSAIDs may be a bit harsh on the stomach, so medication such as Omeprazole may be used alongside them. Discuss this with your pharmacist or GP as anti-inflammatories are not always safe for everyone.

Analgesics: Although pain medication may not aid in removing inflammation, they do sometimes help with the overall discomfort

Steroids: If your symptoms are quite severe or long lasting, despite trying NSAIDs or pain meds, steroids may be an option. Steroids may be taken in the form of an oral reducing course or as an injection. An updated blood test would



also help show the level of inflammation and if steroids may be best for you.

Disease-modifying anti-rheumatic

drugs (DMARDs): If your flares become more frequent, you may need to consider a DMARD which treats the condition long term rather than reducing the symptoms of an occasional flare. Frequency, severity of flares, along with blood work would suggest your need for a DMARD.

During an attack

When your pain is very bad, you should rest your joints. You might find wrist splints and insoles for your shoes helpful.

Ice or heat pads, such as a bag of frozen peas or a hot water bottle, can help ease pain and swelling, but take care not to put them directly on.

Versus Arthritis Helpline:

Call 0800 5200 520 for free
(Monday–Friday, 9am–6pm)
Helpline is closed from 12.00 pm the last Friday of every month for training.

Email: helpline@versusarthritis.org

Rheumatology department contact number: 020 8934 6156 (option 2)

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