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Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)

CRPS is a pain syndrome that may occur after an injury or surgery. Characteristically the pain is worse than the original pain from the injury and may last longer. It can be felt 'inside' but may also be sensitive to touch. The syndrome may also be called reflex sympathetic dystrophy or causalgia. The cause is not known, but it seems to be an 'abnormal inflammation reaction'.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF CRPS

- **Pain**
- **Discolouration** - abnormal red or blue colouring of affected part
- **Temperature** - affected region may be abnormally hot or cold
- **Swelling** - in the injured region
- **Movement** - joints may feel stiff and range of movement may become limited
- **Touch** - the skin may become very sensitive to touch or changes in temperature
- **Boney changes** - demineralisation of bones or osteoporosis can often be seen on x-ray
- **Hair & Nails** - changes in growth
- **Sweating** - more or less than normal

TREATMENT FOR CRPS

Each individual person may require different treatment depending on their symptoms; where the pain is, initiating factors involved with the pain, and duration of the syndrome. Often many health professionals may be involved including your doctor, surgeon, physiotherapist, podiatrist, counsellors, etc.

Some treatments that have been useful for people with CRPS include:

- **Rest** – initially
- **Exercise** – within guidelines of your treating practitioner when you begin to feel better
- **Massage** – can use medicated creams
- **Medication** – talk with your doctor about this
- **Sympathetic block** – injection of anaesthetic (pain reliever) into certain nerves to block the pain signals
- **Stress reduction** – may involve meditation or other methods
- **Counselling** – may help in dealing with pain and resolving other issues that may be inhibiting you healing
- **Icing or heat**
- **Elevation**
- **Compression**
- **Ultrasound**
- **TENS**
- **Nutrition**
- **Acupuncture**

Early and comprehensive treatment of CRPS is the best way to control the symptoms.

