

## What Is It Like To Live With CRPS?

People with **Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)** have a very different perspective of the world we live in.

It is as though the switch in the nervous system that controls pain response is stuck in the "ON" position.

This leaves sufferers in a perpetual state of hypersensitivity, where even the mildest stimulus to the affected area can result in excruciating burning pain.

A hug from a child, a cool summer breeze, holding a cold glass of tea, taking a shower, even the texture and weight of clothing rubbing against skin is unbearably painful to many people with CRPS.

CRPS patients frequently describe feeling as though the affected area has been filled with white hot coals & plunged into a glacier fed river.

In addition to the burning hot and icy cold pain, many also have:

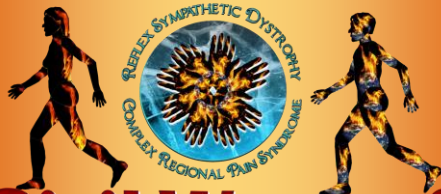
- involuntary muscle movement, tremors, jerks & cramps
- changes in hair & nail growth patterns,
- swelling
- color changes ranging from pale, to red & blotchy to purple
- decreased mobility
- muscle wasting / atrophy



**This Is Our World  
Don't Let It Become Yours**



**CRPS / RSD**



**Civil War to ?**

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## Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) aka Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD)



## What is CRPS?

Complex **Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)** is a chronic neurological pain condition that is believed to be the result of dysfunction in the central or peripheral nervous systems.

Typical features include dramatic changes in the color and temperature of the skin over the affected limb or body part, accompanied by intense burning pain, skin sensitivity, sweating, and swelling.

**CRPS I** is frequently triggered by tissue injury; the term describes all patients with the above symptoms but with no underlying nerve injury.

Patients with **CRPS II** experience the same symptoms but their cases are clearly associated with a nerve injury.



Older terms used to describe CRPS are "**Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD)**", Sundeck's Atrophy, Post-Traumatic Dystrophy, Shoulder-Hand Syndrome, and Reflex Neurovascular Dystrophy (RND), and "Causalgia."

Causalgia is the term first used during the Civil War to describe the intense, burning pain felt by some veterans long after their wounds had healed.

While CRPS can strike at any age and affects men, women, and children; most experts agree that it is more common in young women.

Pain often spreads to include the entire arm or leg, even though the initiating injury might have been only to a finger or toe. Pain can sometimes even travel to the opposite extremity.

CRPS has profound psychological effects on people and their families. Those with CRPS may develop depression and/or anxiety as a direct result of the pains and drastic changes in their lives.

## What Causes CRPS?

The actual cause of complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS) is unknown.

While many people develop CRPS in similar ways or have common symptoms, there is no one reason for the disease.

Experts agree that almost all CRPS begins after mild to severe trauma such as an injury.

CRPS can develop after surgery, a heart attack, a stroke, or an infection. Even something as simple as a sprain can result in the development of CRPS.

## How Is CRPS Treated?

There is no cure, and currently very few effective treatments for CRPS. Reducing pain to a tolerable level and returning as much functionality as possible to the affected limb is the goal of a CRPS patient's Pain Management Plan.

**Medications:** topical analgesic drugs that act locally on painful nerves, skin, and muscles; antiseizure drugs; antidepressants, corticosteroids, and opioids.

However, no single drug or combination of drugs has produced consistent long-lasting improvement in symptoms.

Other types of treatment include:

- Ketamine Infusions
- Physical therapy
- Psychotherapy
- Sympathetic nerve block:
- Spinal cord stimulation
- Intrathecal drug pumps

## Can CRPS Be Prevented?

Recent studies have indicated that taking 500 mg of Vitamin C daily for 50 days following a surgical procedure has the potential to prevent CRPS from developing.

## What Is the Prognosis?

The prognosis for CRPS varies from person to person.

Spontaneous remission from symptoms occurs in certain people. Others can have unremitting pain, and crippling, irreversible changes in spite of treatment.



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