

50,000 to 70,000

Approximately 50,000 to 75,000 people in the United States have a form of myositis, and there are a number of resources available to everyone!



# Get the Facts on Dermatomyositis and Polymyositis

Dermatomyositis (DM) and Polymyositis (PM) are two forms of myositis, a group of autoimmune conditions where the immune system attacks healthy body tissues and cells.<sup>1</sup> In **Dermatomyositis (DM)**, the small blood vessels that supply the skin and muscles are attacked by the immune system.<sup>2</sup> In **Polymyositis (PM)**, the immune system attacks the muscle fibers directly.<sup>3</sup> In both diseases, individuals experience inflammation (eg, pain, swelling) and muscle weakness.<sup>1</sup>

## Signs and Symptoms of DM and PM

No two cases of DM and PM are the same. Signs and symptoms can change over the course of an individual's condition. Listed below are some common signs and symptoms:



### SKIN RASH (DM ONLY)

Individuals with DM often experience an itchy and painful rash, typically developing on the face, eyelids, elbows, knees and/or chest<sup>2</sup>



### JOINT STIFFNESS

Often worst in the morning or after prolonged periods of inactivity<sup>2,4</sup>



### MUSCLE SORENESS

Individuals may experience chronic muscle soreness<sup>2,3</sup>



### MUSCLE WEAKNESS

Individuals may experience progressive weakness that can limit mobility<sup>1</sup>



### SHORTNESS OF BREATH

If chest muscles are affected, the individual may experience trouble breathing<sup>2,3</sup>



## Dermatomyositis and Polymyositis Flares

When symptoms come on suddenly, this may be referred to as a "flare." Flares may be characterized by a single symptom or any group of symptoms.<sup>5</sup>

### What causes a flare?

Flares can be triggered by environmental factors. These factors may include: stress, chemical exposure, infection, or ultraviolet light.<sup>5</sup>

### What to do when a flare occurs:

When a flare occurs, the individual affected is encouraged to see their doctor to determine if any immediate steps must be taken.

The greatest test of courage on earth is to bear defeat without losing heart.

Robert Green Ingersoll



**References:** 1. About Myositis. The Myositis Association website. <https://www.myositis.org/about-myositis/>. Accessed March 15, 2019. 2. Dermatomyositis. National Organization for Rare Disorders website. <https://rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/dermatomyositis/>. Accessed March 15, 2019. 3. Polymyositis. National Organization for Rare Disorders website. <https://rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/polymyositis/>. Accessed March 15, 2019. 4. Polymyositis. Johns Hopkins Myositis Center website. <https://www.hopkinsmyositis.org/myositis/polymyositis/>. Accessed March 15, 2019. 5. Myositis. Arthritis Foundation website. <https://www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/types/myositis/>. Accessed March 15, 2019.



## Treating DM and PM

There is no cure for DM or PM, but certain treatments may reduce symptoms and prevent permanent damage to the body.

Treatment for DM or PM is different for every person. Individuals should talk to their doctor to determine which treatment(s) is/are right for them!

Different treatments for DM or PM may include:<sup>2,4</sup>

- ◆ Medications
- ◆ Physical therapy
- ◆ Rest
- ◆ Heat therapy
- ◆ Braces or other special devices

## Goals of DM or PM Treatment

It is important to understand the goals of your individualized treatment plan. Identifying and keeping track of treatment goals is a key first step. Individuals should discuss their treatment goals with their doctor. Some DM or PM treatment goals may include:<sup>6</sup>

- Reducing inflammation
- Preventing progression of muscle weakness
- Preventing long term complications
- Lifestyle changes to improve strength and physical function



## Self-Care While Living With DM or PM

Coping with DM or PM can be overwhelming at times. Sometimes it can make the individual feel sad, angry, or isolated. Practicing proper self-care can help and is important for both your mental and physical well-being. Some ideas for self-care may include:<sup>7</sup>

- ◆ Staying connected with friends/family
- ◆ Engaging in activities you enjoy
- ◆ Seeking humorous and upbeat entertainment
- ◆ Setting aside leisure time (eg, reading a book, going to the spa)
- ◆ Investing in a hobby
- ◆ Seeking quiet through meditation and/or prayer
- ◆ Eating healthy meals
- ◆ Working with your healthcare provider to develop an exercise program that's right for you

“Normality is a paved road. It's comfortable to walk, but no flowers grow on it.”

*Vincent Van Gogh*

## More Information, Support, and Educational Resources

This list includes helpful websites and organizations that provide information about dermatomyositis, polymyositis, support groups, and other resources!



◆ **The Myositis Association**  
[www.myositis.org](http://www.myositis.org)

◆ **The Arthritis Foundation**  
[www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/types/myositis/](http://www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/types/myositis/)

◆ **National Organization for Rare Disorders**  
[www.rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/dermatomyositis/](http://www.rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/dermatomyositis/)  
[www.rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/polymyositis/](http://www.rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/polymyositis/)

**References:** 6. Treatment of Myositis. Johns Hopkins Myositis Center website. <https://www.hopkinsmyositis.org/unique/treatment-myositis/>. Accessed March 15, 2019.

7. Self-Care for Autoimmune Disease Patients. American Autoimmune website. <https://www.aarda.org/self-care/>. Published September, 2018. Accessed March 15, 2019.

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