Muscular Dystrophy (MD)

Muscular dystrophy (MD) is a group of genetic diseases. These diseases are characterized by progressive weakness and degeneration of the skeletal (bones) or voluntary muscles that control movement. The muscles of the heart and some other involuntary muscles are also affected in some forms of MD. A few forms of MD involve other organs.

The major forms of MD are:

- Myotonic
- Duchenne
- Becker
- Limb-girdle
- Congenital
- Oculopharyngeal
- Distal
- Emery-Dreifuss
- Facioscapulohumeral

Duchenne is the most common form of MD in children. Myotonic MD is the most common form in adults. MD can affect people of all ages. Some forms of MD are first noticed in infancy or childhood. Others forms of MD may not appear until middle age or later.

TREATMENT

- There is no specific treatment for any of the forms of MD.
- You may need **physical therapy** to prevent *contractures. Contractures* are a condition where the shortened muscles around joints cause abnormal and sometimes painful positioning of the joints.
- You may need ***orthoses***. Orthoses are orthopedic appliances used for support.
- You may also need **corrective orthopedic surgery** to improve the quality of life. The cardiac problems that occur with Emery-Dreifuss MD and myotonic MD may require a pacemaker.
- The *myotonia* occurring in myotonic MD may be treated with medications. Myotonia is the delayed relaxation of a muscle after a strong contraction. The medications for this are phenytoin or quinine.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

The patient's outlook with MD varies according to the type of MD. It also varies on *progression* of the disorder. Progression means how the disease advances over time. Some cases may be mild. Some cases may progress very slowly. Some cases allow people a normal lifespan. Other cases may have more marked progression of muscle weakness, functional disability, and loss of ambulation. Life expectancy may depend on the degree of progression. It may also depend on late respiratory deficit. In Duchenne MD, death usually occurs in the late teens to early 20s.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) supports a wide program of research on MD. The goals of these studies are to increase understanding of MD and its cause(s), develop better therapies, and find ways to prevent and cure the disorder.

Researchers are continually working to learn more about this problem.

Most of this information is provided by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

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