Neuritis, Peripheral

Neuritis is the inflammation of a nerve that is not one of the nerves of your head or one coming from your spinal cord. Often there are gradually worsening changes in the nerves. When cranial nerves or spinal nerves are involved, it is called a neuropathy. When numerous nerves are involved it is called polyneuritis or polyneuropathy. The problems caused depend upon which nerves are involved. Almost any nerve may be involved. If it is the optic nerve that is attached to the eye, there are problems with your vision. If it is the large nerve going down into the leg (*sciatic neuritis*), there may be pain in the leg. Neuritis may become severe. There may also be times when everything is better, like a remission.

SYMPTOMS

Some of the symptoms of neuritis in *sensory nerves* (nerves that feel things) include:

- Numbness
- Tingling
- Burning
- Pins and needles or pain sensations

When motor nerves are involved, symptoms may include:
Muscle weakness in varying degrees to complete paralysis.

CAUSES

- Injury or pressure on nerves from overuse of structures near the nerves such as a carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Damage to blood vessels (loss of blood supply or bleeding into nerve tissue).
- Infections involving nerves such as shingles, polio, tetanus, or leprosy.
- Damage due to heavy metal exposure. Some metals causing damage are arsenic, mercury, and lead.
- Chemical poisoning from insecticides, drugs, or alcohol.
- Bad reactions to vaccination such as in Guillain Barré syndrome.
- Damage to nerves from acidosis, vitamin deficiencies, or diabetes.

DIAGNOSIS

- Your caregiver may suspect what is wrong by taking a history.
- There may be specialized laboratory tests and x-rays.

TREATMENT

The treatment of the problems will depend upon the cause. When the problems are due to chemicals, vitamin deficiencies or exposures to heavy metals, often correcting the exposure or treating the deficiency will improve the problem. Some infections may be treated with *antibiotics.* These are medications that kill germs. There are a number of treatments to help multiple sclerosis and there may be long periods of remission. There is no cure.

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