Pseudogout
Calcium Pyrophosphate Deposition Disease

Pseudogout is an arthritis that causes pain, swelling and inflammation in a joint. This is due to the presence of calcium pyrophosphate crystals in the joint fluid. Pseudogout often follows minor injuries. It may also be associated with a history of gout or high calcium levels in the blood. The knee is the most frequently involved joint. X-rays may show calcium deposits on the joint surface. Acute attacks usually develop rapidly over just one day. A joint fluid exam may be needed to confirm the diagnosis.

SYMPTOMS

- Intense, constant pain in one joint that seems to have come on for no reason.
- The joint area may be hot to the touch, red, swollen and stiff.
- Pain may last from several days to a few weeks. It may then may disappear. Later it may start again, possibly in a different joint.
- Pseudogout usually affects the knees. It can also affect the wrists, elbows, shoulders and ankles.

CAUSES

The exact cause of the disease is not known.

- The chances of getting pseudogout seem to increase with age.
- It may be passed down from family members (*hereditary*).
- Events such as strokes, heart attacks or surgery may increase the risk of pseudogout.
- Pseudogout can be associated with other disorders (hemophilia, ochronosis, amyloidosis, or hormonal disorders). These illnesses are considered in the initial evaluation of a patient with pseudogout.
- It is common in adults with dehydration seen in hospitalization or surgery. Patients with known pseudogout should stay well hydrated before and after operations.

DIAGNOSIS

A diagnosis is often suggested on an exam or suspected when an abnormal buildup of calcium salts (*calcifications*) are seen in the cartilage of joints on x-rays. The final diagnosis is made when fluid from the joint is examined under a special microscope used to find calcium pyrophosphate crystals. The crystals of pseudogout and gout may be present at the same time.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Apply ice to the sore joint for 15 to 20 minutes four times per day while awake for the first 2 days. Put the ice in a plastic bag and place a towel between the bag of ice and your skin.
- Keep your affected joints elevated when possible to lessen swelling.
- Use crutches with non-weight as needed. Walk without crutches as the pain allows, or as instructed. Start gradually with weight bearing.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Once you recover from the painful attack, exercise regularly to keep your muscle strength. Not using a sore joint will cause the muscles around it to become weak and this may increase in pain. Low impact exercises such as swimming, bicycling, water aerobics and walking may be best. This will give you energy, strengthen your heart, help you control your weight, and improve your feelings of well being.
- Maintain a healthy weight so your joints do not have to bear more weight than necessary.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have an increase in joint pain not relieved with medications.
- You develop a temperature greater than 102º F (38.9º C) orally.

- You have more serious symptoms such as a fever, skin rash, diarrhea, vomiting, headache or other joint pains. You have an increase in joint pain not relieved with medications.

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