

GIVING

hope

"Sometimes you don't realize your own strength until you come face to face with your greatest weakness."

—Susan Gale

HAVE AN INSPIRING QUOTE YOU WANT TO SHARE?
Email us at msclinic@smcne.com

Managing Spasticity in the Winter Months

As winter is approaching, increased spasticity can be a concern for the MS community. Although there is relief from the heat that often worsens symptoms for people with MS, the pain from increased spasms can make life difficult.

Spasticity is a condition in which muscles stiffen or tighten, preventing normal fluid movement. Spasticity is caused by damage to nerve pathways within the brain or spinal cord that control muscle movements.

There are many options available to treat spasticity depending on the severity of the spasticity and its impact on quality of life.

Multiple modalities are often used in combination. Depending on what muscles spasticity impacts, it can cause difficulty with eating, speaking or walking. Enlisting the help of

a physical therapist and occupational therapist is essential to help develop an individualized treatment plan including stretches and exercises. Heat has been shown to help with muscle tightness but can have an unintended consequence for those that suffer heat intolerance. A balancing act is required and is always based on individual tolerance.

Some find help from a warm bath with Epsom salt to relieve stiffness. For those that do not tolerate a bath, magnesium cream on the affected muscles is a great compromise. Avoiding the cold is not an option in the Midwest during the winter months. Keeping body temperature stable with warm, loose clothing when going outside is essential as tight clothing can worsen spasticity.

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Saunders
MEDICAL CENTER

Be Well.

Managing Spasticity (continued)

TENS units (*Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation*) have also shown to help reduce painful muscle spasms and improve sleep.

Medications for Spasticity

Baclofen is often our initial oral medication option for spasticity. It is great for those who suffer with multiple areas of spasticity. It is an inexpensive option that can be taken scheduled or as needed. There are drawbacks of excessive weakness if the dose is too high, sleepiness, nausea and dry mouth. Implanted intrathecal Baclofen pumps are an option for severe cases of spasticity and have fewer systemic side effects.

Tizanidine is another oral option for spasticity. It tends to have less weakness associated with it, but can still cause sleepiness and dry mouth. It is not used as frequently since it can cause a lowering of blood pressure when on high blood pressure medications.

Botulinum Toxin for Spasticity

When spasticity is localized to a specific area we can treat with Botox or Dysport injections here in the MS Clinic. When botulinum toxin is injected into an overactive muscle it blocks neurotransmitters from activating it. It essentially paralyzes that section of the muscle—reducing the tightness and rigidity of the muscle while still allowing movement. Based on examination of a person's muscle spasticity, a plan is made for injection location. The plan is adjusted as needed to suit each person's needs. Botox does wear off and needs to be reinjected every 90 days.

Assistive Devices

When spasticity causes problems with walking, assistive devices can help people stay active and independent. Foot braces can help keep toes from dragging, walkers can add stability and scooters can provide mobility. Occupational therapy can help with finding appropriate assistive devices and with fittings.



Today's tips—

- Please call Linda at 402-443-4191 ext. 486 with any billing questions rather than calling the third-party biller listed on your statement.
- **Refills** Please contact your pharmacy for refill requests. Refill requests cannot be filled on weekends. Allow 3-5 business days for refill requests. Please plan ahead: The clinic will be closed early October 31st. Closed on November 23rd and 24th for Thanksgiving, December 25th for Christmas, and January 1st for New Year's Day.
- Please reapply for patient assistance in January to renew assistance for 2024.



- To contact a nurse for **urgent needs after hours call 402-443-1475.**
- We encourage you to sign up for your patient portal. This allows easy access to your records and allows you to communicate directly with our nurses. Please contact Marcy Swanson at 402-443-1421 ext 376 if you require assistance setting up your account.
- If able, please check in for your appointments at the front lobby/entrance.
- Please remember to **update Janet with all insurance changes, medical and pharmacy.**

YOUR MS CLINIC

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