
Neuromuscular disease – muscular dystrophy, myasthenia gravis, CMT and inflammatory myopathy

This includes muscular dystrophy, myasthenia gravis, Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease (CMT) and a disease called inflammatory myopathy, which causes chronic muscle inflammation and weakness.

Muscular dystrophy is an inherited condition in which gradually causes the muscles to waste and weaken. It affects more than 70,000 people in the UK, and is usually caused by faults in the genes which are responsible for the structure and function of muscles.

There are lots of different types of muscular dystrophy, each of which affects different muscles. The severity of the condition can vary greatly from person to person, but is usually progressive which means the symptoms will get worse over time.

Although there is currently no cure, our team can offer a range of treatments and therapies to relieve symptoms and make everyday life easier. This includes help to improve mobility, medication to increase muscle strength, such as steroids, and surgery to correct complications like **scoliosis**, or abnormal curvature of the spine. The multidisciplinary team will discuss all of the options with you before deciding on the best course of treatment.

Myasthenia gravis is a rare, long-term condition which occurs when the body's immune system starts attacking the junction between the nerve and muscle, in turn affecting the muscle's ability to contract and causing weakness. Muscles in the face and eye are most commonly affected, while the condition can also cause problems with movement, swallowing and breathing.

The condition can be difficult to diagnose, which means our team will need to carry out specialist tests on anyone who has been referred to the hospital by their GP. This could include blood tests, nerve conduction tests or an edrophonium test, where a neurologist will inject a drug called edrophonium chloride into the body and carefully measure the effect it has on improving muscle power.

If a diagnosis is confirmed, we will recommend treatments to help control your symptoms.

This could include medications which improve communication between the nerves and muscles, and immuno-suppressants, which improve muscle strength. In other cases, we may refer you to the neurosurgery team for removal of the thymus gland, which is part of the immune system and is often abnormal in people with myasthenia gravis.

The good news is that treatment for myasthenia gravis can often be very effective, significantly improving muscle strength so that patients can enjoy a normal life.

We also care for patients with Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease (CMT), an inherited condition which damages the peripheral nerves which control the muscles and relay sensory information from the limbs to the brain. The symptoms of CMT usually start appearing in childhood, and can include muscle weakness or numbness in the feet, ankles, legs and hands, an awkward way of walking and high arched or very flat feet. As CMT is a progressive condition, these symptoms will slowly get worse over time, making everyday tasks increasingly difficult.

If your GP thinks you may have CMT, you will be referred to our neurology team for specialist tests, such as a nerve biopsy or electromyography. As with other neuromuscular conditions, we will be able to recommend a variety of treatments to relieve your symptoms, which can include physiotherapy, exercise, occupational therapy and walking aids. Some patients may also be referred for surgery to correct problems such as flat feet.