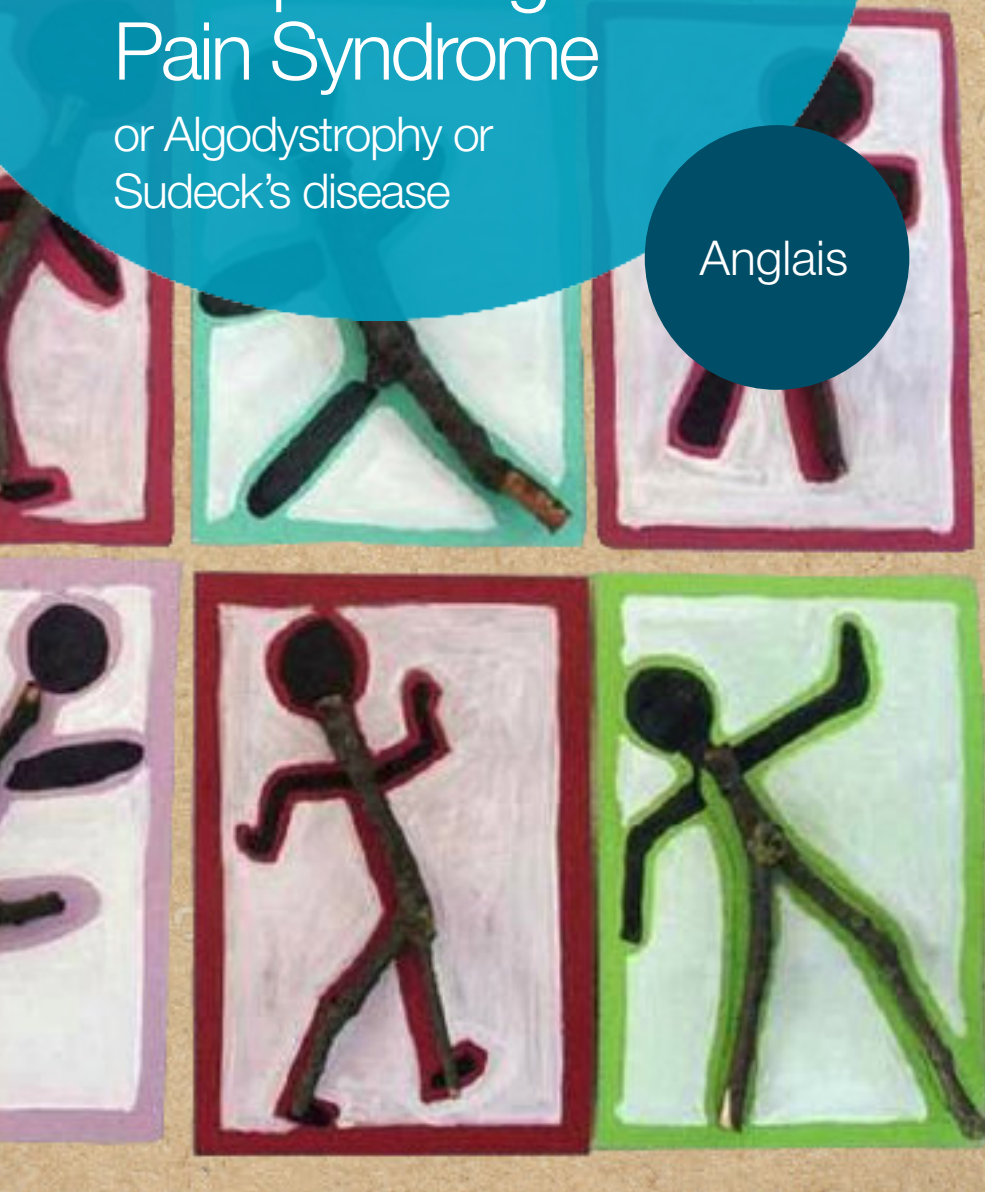


# Complex Regional Pain Syndrome

or Algodystrophy or  
Sudeck's disease

Anglais



suva

 **crr sion**  
clinique romande de réadaptation

# What is it ?

Several names were given to algodystrophy. We call it also Sudeck's disease, or Complex regional pain syndrom (CRPS). In this flyer, we'll call it algodystrophy.

Following a shock, an injury, a fracture or an operation, our body reacts. With algodystrophy, this reaction is too strong as if our body overreacts.

This reaction is manifested by a number of troubles in and around the injury zone or the site of the operation. This reaction is not due to a microbe, or nor is it an infection.

Sometimes, these troubles manifest themselves at a distance. Certain patients, for example, have pain in a hand and shoulder, even if it is only the shoulder which received the shock. Other patients have pain in a foot and knee even if it is only the knee which was injured.

If this flyer doesn't give you all the answers :

- Discuss with your doctor
- Visit the website (french) : <http://www.planetesante.ch/Maladies/syndrome-douloureux-regional-complexe>

# What do we know about algodystrophy ?

## We know very well how algodystrophy manifests itself

### Pain :

- Pain may be very intense; it is present during the day, or the night, at rest or with movement
- The person feels a lot of different pains which seem strange: there are deep, dull ache, burning sensations, electric pain, pain in the zone injured and pain moving around the zone. The pains can be explained by the fact that we no longer move, that we don't have the posture that we had before and still because, with pain, muscles are tensed and hard
- Pain sometimes varies, but we don't know why: at some moments or at some days, it's stronger, at others moments or days it isn't as strong.

### Limitation of mobility :

The joint is stiff and reduces the movement. It's like if what is around heals up too much and obstructs moving well.

### Pain is accompanied by other symptoms :

- Changes in temperature ... from warm to cold
- Changes in colour ... paleness to blotch
- Swollen (it swells and becomes a little less swollen)
- Sensitive reactions to touch, beyond the affected zone
- Sweat which increases
- Skin which may become brighter
- Changes in hair growth (more or less)
- Sensation of weakness and sometimes tremor
- The impression that the affected part doesn't really belong to our body
- Sometimes, the hand or the foot takes a strange posture.

## We know very well the psychological impacts of algodystrophy

- Worries and anxiety: algodystrophy destabilizes
- A lower mood: it is difficult to be inactive.

# How is It evolving ?

Most of the time, the course of recovery is favourable especially if the pain fades, if the mobility is not too much reduced and if the person is active, but the recovery period takes a long time.

**At the beginning**, in the most common forms, the manifestations looks like inflammation of the affected area.

- It is the moment when pain is intense, persitent, present during the day and the night...
- It is the moment when there is a little mobility...
- It is the moment when it swells, it's warm or cold ...
- It is the more difficult period.

At this moment, the most important is to treat the pain and to maintain mobility.

**Then,**

- It is the moment when pain becomes less intense, less persistent and is linked to activity and movement
- It is the moment when mobility is still limited but gets better little by little
- It is the moment when we see progress and changes.

At this moment, the most important is to recover mobility and always to treat pain.

**Finally,**

- It is the evolution towards recovery and most often towards cure
- It is possible that some pain and some stiffness persist.

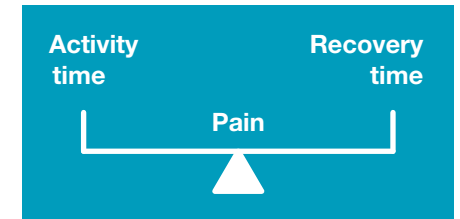
There is another form of rare dystrophy, where from the beginning there is less swelling and less heat, and where it is mainly pain that is in the foreground.

# How to treat ?

## We know very well what we have to do

- At the beginning, in the form that looks like inflammation and is the most common, the most useful **drugs** are cortisone or drugs that act on the bone (bisphosphonates)
- **Do exercices and move all your body !** With a hand dystrophy, you can walk with a foot dystrophy, you can do activities with the arms.
- **Do not forget to use the affected limb in everyday life !** With a hand dystrophy, you can move the other joints of the arm, the elbow and the shoulder
- **Move the affected joint ! BUT ALWAYS PACING ACTIVITY.** It is a matter of balance : doing what is necessary to do in order to progress without having too much pain. Not enough is bad, too much is also bad.

It's important to find the good balance between :



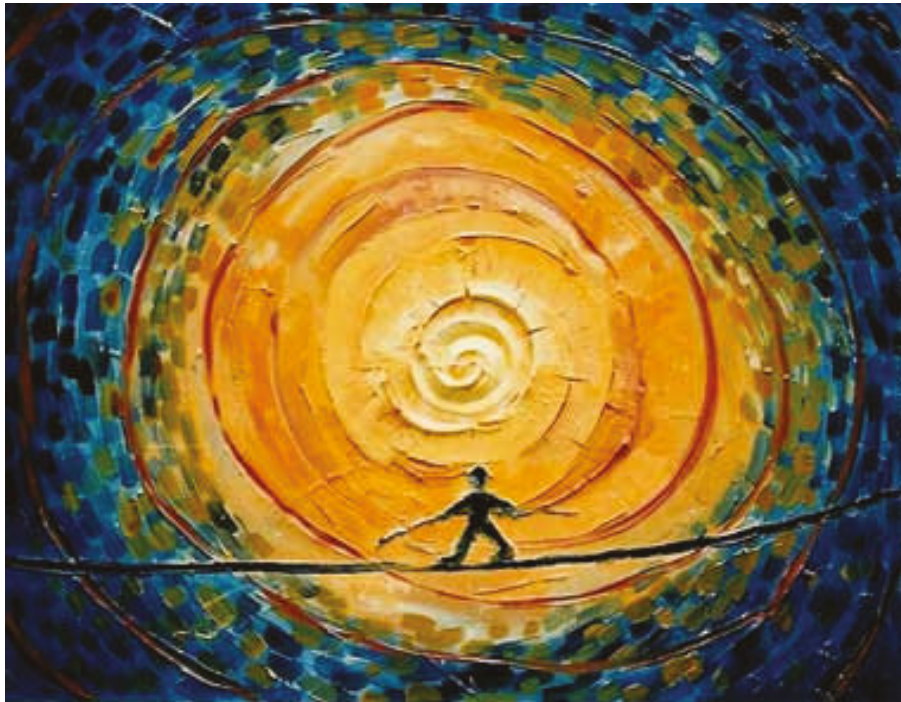
This good balance at the beginning is often between 1 and 2 hours of recovery for 30 minutes of activity. Gradually the recovery time decreases.

For instance, dancing an hour and needing 4 days in order to recover is not a very good balance. But dancing an hour and recovering in one night may become a good balance.

- Discuss with your therapist in order to find the good balance
- Be patient because it may last a long time: often several months, even 1 to 2 years
- Do not hesitate to ask questions for reassurance

# What don't we know about algodystrophy ?

We do not know exactly why a person develops this reaction: some do, others don't.



R. Desnos, arbrelettres, 2009

# And after ?

Once the person recover from an algodystrophy, he could live again as before: doing the same activities, his job, his leisure activities, his sports...

- after an algodystrophy, there is no more risk of bone fragility, even with age
- after an algodystrophy, there is no more risk of osteoarthritis, even with age
- after an algodystrophy, there is no more risk of osteoporosis, even with age.

## Prevention

We don't know exactly what risks of relapse are. We don't know how to prevent algodystrophy. If we suspect an algodystrophy, the most important is to relieve pain particularly at the beginning. Taking vitamin C may prevent an algodystrophy.

If you already had an algodystrophy and you have another accident or a new operation, talk to your doctor.

# Questions ?

## **PD Dr François Luthi**

Service de réadaptation de  
l'appareil locomoteur  
Médecin chef de service  
Tél. +41 27 603 21 75

## **Mme Christine Favre**

Service de psychosomatique  
Psychologue spécialiste en  
psychothérapie FSP  
Tél. +41 27 603 24 75

## **Clinique romande de réadaptation**

Av. Grand-Champsec 90  
Case postale 352  
CH-1951 Sion

T. +41 27 603 30 30  
F. +41 27 603 30 31

info@crr-suva.ch  
www.crr-suva.ch

