

Dental Guidelines for CRPS/RSD Patients: Handle With Care!

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (**CRPS**), previously known as Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (**RSD**), is a “neuro-inflammatory” condition causing the nervous and immune systems to malfunction, sending constant pain signals to the brain. **CRPS** is characterized by *severe burning pain*, pathological changes in bone and skin, excessive sweating, tissue swelling, and *extreme sensitivity to touch*. The McGill Pain Scale rated CRPS higher than childbirth, amputation, and cancer pain. Those with **CRPS** are extraordinarily sensitive to certain stimuli, such as touch, movement, vibrations, noise, light, and needle sticks.

Tips for Patients

- Carry a copy of the RSDSA Hospital, Emergency, Dental Guidelines, along with the “I HAVE CRPS” card, to validate and educate practitioners.
- Hand the following to your dentist:
 - A computer printout of your detailed medical history since your 1st episode of CRPS, including the precipitating event.
 - Your treatments for CRPS and treating physicians. List of any allergies-List of current medications prescribed, OTC, specialty compounded medications (dosage & frequency).
 - List of any AIMD (active implantable medical devices) SCS (spinal cord stimulators), pain pumps, cardiac pacemakers, defibrillator, stents, and monitoring devices.
 - List of any implants: breast, cochlear (ear), intra-ocular lens (eye), heart valves, contraceptive, prosthesis, etc.
 - List of any organ transplants. Research practices specializing in treating patients with chronic pain conditions (American Dental Association) and willing to learn about CRPS. <http://rds.org/crps-and-dentistry/>
- Be patient while educating your dental team: dentist, dentist anesthesiologist, periodontist, orthodontist, dental assistants/hygienist, lab technicians, etc.
- To prevent *losing YOUR teeth and maintain YOUR overall health*, begin with a comprehensive dental evaluation to develop a treatment plan to suit YOUR needs as a CRPS patient.
- Share any dental and oral health issues including:
 - Allergic reactions or sensitivities to dental products or ingredients
 - Burning mouth, dry mouth, erosion, dental decay, chronic mouth inflammation/irritation, orthodontics, muscle issues of the head, neck and jaw, the tongue, or salivary glands changes.
- Develop YOUR daily oral hygiene plan with practitioner including:
 - Type of toothbrush i.e. soft bristle
 - Use of mouthwash and or moisturizing spray
 - Use of floss
 - Adopt a Health dental diet and take vitamins (approved by your doctor)

Tips for Medical Professional:

- 2 Online Accredited Courses on CRPS for Practitioners – Free <https://rds.org/accredited-course-on-crps-for-mds-ph-d-s-and-rns/>
- RSDSA’s Financial Assistance Resource Directory https://rds.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/2012-13Directory_final_web.pdf
- CRPS is a REAL medical condition requiring support, education, and a *plan of action* to minimize further pain.
- CRPS has both a sensory and autonomic dysfunction resulting in Central Sensitization of pain, causing:

Hyperalgesia (increased sensitivity to pain)

- Consider anesthesia options including: topical anesthesia, numbing gel, prior to injections, cleanings, X-Rays.
- Consider anesthesia options including moderate sedation & general anesthesia with long dental appointments or procedures such as a root canal treatment which can exacerbate CRPS symptoms.
- Extreme gentleness using dental equipment (spit suction, drill, eater spray, dental tooth pick, etc.) to minimize pain.

Allodynia (pain induced from non-painful)

- Hypoallergenic materials may be helpful with sensitivities.
- Bright lights can be a patient trigger, sunglasses may help
- Room temperature may need to be adjusted per patients’ needs.
- Avoid being in the path of vented air from HVAC systems or fans
- Avoid ice to CRPS area, prevents further nerve damage
- Avoid anything bumping into patient.
- Patient position is key to positive outcomes consider utilizing bolsters, pillow, gel support, blankets to support patient.
- Noise from monitors, dental equipment, diagnostics, voices, phones, TV, intercom, etc. can elevate pain
- Shorter treatment sessions may help minimize CRPS flares.

Atrophy (skin, muscles and bone weakness)

- Assess for limited ROM, weakness for assistance in and out of the dental chair.
- Assess patient need for adaptive oral hygiene devices

Hyperhidrosis (abnormal sweating pattern)

- Abnormal skin sweating, skin temperature and skin color changes (mottle, cyanotic, red, purple) may require adjustment of environmental room controls including use of fan for some patients (do NOT place patient in the direct path of a fan).
- Hair/nail changes and swelling

Movement Disorders

- Assess the need to alter dental treatment due to motor disorders, involuntary muscle spasms & movements (bradykinesia, dystonia, myoclonus, excessive startle & tremor); use of (bite blocks, positioning the patient, use of sedation or general anesthesia) can be helpful

Dysesthesia (creepy, crawly, sensation to touch)

- Avoid coming into contact with affected CRPS sites.
- If more comfortable for the patient & if possible, provide dental treatment standing/sitting

Overview:

- A minor/major dental procedure may require: pre-medication, additional pain management plan including Ketamine (IV, troche), Nitrous Oxide, oral, topical anesthesia (numbing gel) to minimize exacerbations.
- Maintain access to emergency equipment and certifications
- Many have secondary conditions (POTS, MCAS, EDS)

