WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SPASTICITY

Spasticity is like a charley horse that never ends. Symptoms include painful, stiff, rigid muscles, involuntary contractions or muscle spasms, and overactive reflexes.

EFFECTS OF SPASTICITY

- Bent elbow and arm pressed against the chest
- Stiffness in arms, fingers
- Tight fist
- Stiffness in legs or knees
- Stiff knee
- Pointed foot
- Curled toes

About 25 to 43% of stroke survivors will have spasticity in the first year after their stroke.
COMPLICATIONS FROM SPASTICITY

- Atypical posture
- Contractures (permanent contraction of the muscles and tendons)
- Bone and joint deformities
- Difficulty with care and hygiene
- Skin irritation due to spasms

TREATMENTS FOR SPASTICITY

There’s no cure for spasticity. But a combination of these and other therapies and medications can lessen the symptoms and improve strength and movement:

- Targeted injections of botulinum toxin to block nerve pain and relieve tight muscles
- Oral medications to help relax the nerves and muscles
- Neuromuscular electrical stimulation or vibrations applied to spasmatic muscles
- Intrathecal baclofen therapy may be used to deliver continuous medication to ease severe muscle contractions and spasms
- Gentle stretching of tighter muscles
- Range-of-motion exercises
- Frequent movement and repositioning of body parts
- Surgery on affected muscles, tendons or joints to block pain and restore movement

LEARN MORE AT STROKE.ORG/SPASTICITY

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