

# reflex sympathetic dystrophy



## Get informed care and relief for complex pain.

### What is RSD?

RSD, or “reflex sympathetic dystrophy,” is a chronic pain syndrome of the sympathetic nervous system. It usually follows an identifiable event, such as a fracture, torn ligament or crush injury. RSD is also referred to as “chronic regional pain syndrome” (CRPS).

### What causes RSD?

The sympathetic nervous system is a network of nerves that goes to all of the body's structures, including muscles, tendons, ligaments and organs. Its job is to inform the brain and spinal cord when something goes wrong with any of these tissues. For example, if you sprain your ankle, the initial sharp pain is followed by a longer-lasting burning pain. That burning pain is your sympathetic nervous system. While the burning usually stops over time, sometimes it doesn't. Instead, the sympathetic nervous system's response will continue running, like a car engine that “diesels” after you turn it off. This is RSD/CRPS.

### What are dystrophy's symptoms?

Dystrophy is characterized by persistent burning pain, extreme sensitivity to touch, swelling, excessive sweating and abnormal skin color. It can be difficult to describe where the pain begins or ends, but people with RSD usually know that weather changes make it worse. Weather-sensitive pain is a major feature of RSD. The painful area may always feel cold and usually will be sensitive to touch and cold temperatures. Dystrophy's hallmark symptoms are abnormal skin color and sweating, and they can progress to swelling, loss of range of motion and even muscle and bone loss.

### How is RSD diagnosed?

Like other complex pain disorders, RSD often goes undiagnosed or is misdiagnosed. For example, many RSD patients are told they have fibromyalgia, because the two disorders have overlap and shared characteristics. Because he is highly experienced with complex pain problems, Dr. Robert G. Schwartz can readily identify dystrophy by its symptoms and through tests that evaluate skin temperature, blood flow and bone loss.

### Treating dystrophy... with meaningful results.

Typically, RSD/CRPS is treated by merely addressing the pain. At Piedmont Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Dr. Schwartz also strives to find and treat the problem generating the dystrophy. Is there a torn ligament that needs to be fixed? Is there an injury site with hidden infection or impaired blood flow? While national success rates are terrible, Dr. Schwartz can provide up to 75% relief for five out of ten patients. And for the remainder, he can manage their pain, prevent its spread and provide medical support.

### Resolving even the most complex pain with innovative solutions and proven leadership.



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