

with a significant increase in mobility, function and quality of life. Traditional treatments for this [chronic condition](#) typically minimize the pain, which limits physiotherapy significantly and usually leads to greater deterioration of the affected limb.

CPRS can vary from joint stiffness and moderate pain in the arms or legs to [paralysis](#) and complete loss of function in more extreme cases. People suffering from this condition usually have a poor prognosis. That's because the condition often leads to extensive changes in the brain itself, making treatment to the affected limb almost ineffective. Given that the brain is usually affected in this chronic condition, it's almost impossible to reduce the pain of this disease by trying to treat the isolated limb. The result is a vicious circle, where the pain of the condition limits the amount of therapy, which in turn causes more deterioration in the limb and the brain, which further hampers any recovery.

Typically, physicians resist therapies where excessive levels of pain are involved, for fear of causing further injuries to the arm or leg. However, the habitual pain from CRPS Type I is often a false warning sign. This seriously limits the extent of therapy that's offered, and often precludes the more aggressive treatments like traction, stretching and massage. Often, the result is that people's joints begin to deteriorate even faster.

"In our experience one of the cornerstones of the success of pain exposure physical therapy is to motivate the patient to undergo both the painful interventions and to keep training and exercising at home," says one of the co-authors, Robert van Dongen. This new insight into this debilitating condition allows doctors and physiotherapists to provide patients with hope for a more functional and normal life.

More information: Pain exposure physical therapy may be a safe and effective treatment for longstanding complex regional [pain](#) syndrome

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