

FIGHTING BACK – SCLERODERMA AWARENESS

In collaboration with Scleroderma Awareness Month, this guide has been developed to share with your patients as a general summary of Scleroderma including symptoms, treatment options and patient/doctor engagement for the successful management of this condition.

01 | When Your Body Turns on You

Scleroderma [skler-uh-dur-muh] is a group of diseases that affects the tissue supporting your skin and internal organs, causing it to harden or thicken. It can also cause swelling or pain in the muscles and joints, as well as problems with blood vessels and major organs, including the heart, lungs and kidneys. As with many autoimmune diseases, there is no clear cause for Scleroderma; however, it is not contagious or cancerous.

02 | Types of Scleroderma & Symptoms

Scleroderma is a complex disease and can have a wide range of symptoms depending on the individual. The disease is categorized as follows:

- Localized – only the skin tissues are affected. No major organs are involved & the symptoms can range from mild to severe.
- Systemic – skin, tissue, blood vessel & major organ damage involvement.

Varying from case-to-case, the following includes symptoms of Scleroderma:

- Hardened, shiny skin – commonly on the hands & face
- Raynaud's Phenomenon – cold fingers that may turn red, white or blue
- Painful or swollen joints & muscle weakness
- Sjogren's Syndrome – dry eyes and/or mouth
- Shortness of Breath
- Gastrointestinal Issues – heartburn & diarrhea

03 | Treatment Options

Although there is presently no known cure for Scleroderma, you may find relief from mild to moderate exercise, physical and/or occupational therapy, skin treatment (including light and laser

therapy) and stress management. Also, there are medications your healthcare practitioner may prescribe or recommend to help ease your symptoms, some of which are listed below.

- NSAIDS
- Low-Dose Corticosteroids
- Calcium Channel Blockers
- ACE Inhibitors
- Prostaglandin Derivatives
- Antacids or H2 Blockers

04 | A Winning Team

Chronic illness, including Scleroderma, can be a discouraging experience and can lead to depression. Be sure to discuss these feelings with your doctor and do not hesitate to accept help from family and friends. As a patient, you can increase your well-being by working closely with your physician. Keeping appointments, asking questions and discussing your symptoms and options are the best way to form an alliance in the battle against this disease.

For more information on Scleroderma Awareness Month, including finding a support group, news and treatment, visit: <http://www.scleroderma.org/>

Did You Know?

80% of Scleroderma patients are female

References

<http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/scleroderma?page=2>
<http://www.srfcure.org/for-patients/current-treatments>
<http://sclerodermaaware.org/>