

A massage can help relieve muscle spasms

DR. GOTT



PETER GOTT, M.D.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I'm a 69-year-old female with torticollis. It's very painful for me because of arthritis of the neck and spine. I'm currently taking Darvocet, Ativan and Alarax. Recently, my doctor started me on Voltaren 50 milligrams once a day. Now he says he won't give me anything for pain because I'm on too much medication already. I'd give it all up for one good muscle relaxant. What would you recommend?

DEAR READER: Torticollis is temporary, painful spasm of the neck muscles. It can occur in people of any age and is not usually related to arthritis. In my experience, pain medication (such as Darvocet) and anti-anxiety drugs (such as Ativan) are not particularly effective in relieving torticollis. Voltaren, a drug used for arthritis, isn't a good choice either.

I think you're right about a muscle relaxant. Ask your doctor to consider prescribing Robaxin or Parafon Forte; each is a relaxant without sedative properties. Also, you might try applying heat to your neck; a hot-water bottle or heating pad (turned to a low setting) may help. Remember,

too, that physical therapy and massage often relieve painful muscle spasms.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I read your article about tooth grinding (bruxism). I'm a 36-year-old female and had a progressive habit of tooth clenching. A friend suggested the following: 2,000 milligrams vitamin B-5, 1,000 milligrams vitamin C, 1,500 milligrams calcium and 100 milligrams B complex daily. I shared the information with my dentist, and he now recommends it to his patients who suffer from the same problem. Please pass this information on.

DEAR READER: Bruxism commonly reflects tension; therefore, patients who grind or clench their teeth are often helped by stress counseling. Until I read your letter, I was unaware that a vitamin/calcium combination might aid bruxism. Since you appear to have been helped by this therapy and the amounts of vitamins and calcium are not excessive, I'll pass your experience on to other readers. Thank you for writing.

DEAR DR. GOTT: My 2-year-old daughter has been diagnosed as a probable idiopathic toe walker. Is it common? Is it painful? Will she grow out of it? Before and during my pregnancy, I took Dilantin and phenobarbital for seizures and feel this could be the cause. What will correct the problem?

DEAR READER: Some children walk on the balls of their feet because of a congenital shortening of the Achilles' tendons, which attach the calf muscles to the heels. These chil-

dren often need surgery to correct the problem so they can walk properly.

On the other hand, many children naturally walk on their toes. Such a common habit is not harmful or painful, and youngsters usually outgrow it by the time they are 4 or 5.

I recommend you follow your pediatrician's advice about whether to leave your daughter's condition alone or seek further consultation with a specialist, such as an orthopedic surgeon. I don't believe your treatment for seizures played any role in her toe-walking.

Because you are worried about the effects of your medicine, I am sending you a free copy of my Health Report "Epilepsy: The Falling Sickness."

DEAR DR. GOTT: Four years ago, I had surgery for medullary cancer of the thyroid. I now have a right paralyzed vocal cord from scar tissue and radiation therapy. My voice is very weak, and I cough constantly. My doc-

tor has suggested Teflon injections into the vocal cord. Do you think this would help?

DEAR READER: I am not an ear-nose-and-throat specialist, so I won't comment on whether a Teflon injection would be appropriate for you.

The purpose of the Teflon injection is to stabilize and stiffen a vocal cord that has been injured. Such an injury may follow neck surgery or irradiation if one of the laryngeal nerves, which control movement of the vocal cords, is severed or impaired.

In patients who have had surgery for thyroid cancer, doctors would naturally worry that either the tumor had spread and/or post-operative scar tissue might be the cause of hoarseness and cough. In these instances, surgery to remove malignant cells and scar tissue would be more appropriate than Teflon injections.

If you feel uncomfortable about the advice given by your doctor, I suggest you seek a second opinion from another

ear-nose-and-throat specialist.

To give you more information, I am sending you a free copy of my Health Report "Viruses and Cancer."

DEAR DR. GOTT: Please tell me about the new drug for Parkinson's disease.

DEAR READER: Selegiline (Eldepryl) has recently been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for treatment of severe Parkinson's disease. It is used in combination with the standard drug therapy, levodopa. Selegiline inhibits an enzyme that inactivates levodopa. Formerly, many patients taking levodopa developed a tolerance to the drug, requiring larger and larger doses, resulting in severe side effects, such as nausea, flushing, confusion, palpitations and involuntary body movements.

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