

Conversion Reaction

A Guide For Patients/Families



This brochure provides information about Conversion Reaction, its causes, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment options. It is designed to respond to the questions most frequently asked by patients and their families.



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What Is A Conversion Reaction?

It is a condition in which extreme emotional or psychological stress is unconsciously converted to physical symptoms. It is not uncommon.

What Are The Causes Of Conversion Reaction:


- Psychological conflict with parents, husband, in-laws;
- Unfulfilled ambitions;
- Marriage against one's will;
- Unemployment;
- Loss of a loved one, unresolved grief;
- Rejection by parents and friends;
- Any other significant stress or life event.

What Are The Signs And Symptoms Of Conversion Reaction?

Variable. Time limited. May appear over time or with little warning as a result of, or concurrent with a mild illness, an emotional event or as a response to a natural disaster. May include:

- Poor coordination or balance, pseudo (false)-paralysis, inability to speak;
- Weakness in limbs, difficulty in swallowing;
- Tics and tremors;
- Inability to walk or stand;



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- Double vision, tunnel vision, blindness, deafness, hallucinations or the absence of touch or pain sensation;
 - Pseudo (false) seizures are common.


In many cases, the physical symptoms work to deflect from the actual stress and reduce anxiety as a way of coping. Although the conversion reaction may provide some advantage to the individual, the symptoms are not conscious, and to the patient they are real. Symptoms often occur as part of a variety of psychiatric conditions.

What The Doctor Looks For:

- Complete medical and psycho-social history;
- Physical cause of the symptoms;
- Inconsistencies in the presentation of symptoms.

How Conversion Reaction Is Treated?

- Complete medical and psycho-social history
- Mental status examination
- Special notice of any recent stressors
- No medication unless there are also psychiatric disorders also.
- Resolve anxiety and psychological conflict. You, the patient, must understand and accept that these symptoms are temporary and without any physical cause
- Encouragement to share anxieties and identify the cause

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- Gradually become involved in activities
 - Depending upon the symptoms - physical therapy and exercises may be prescribed
 - Involve family in your care
 - Individual, family and behavioural group therapy
 - Learn more adaptive ways of coping.

The Future:

- Many symptoms will discontinue on their own within a few days or weeks;
- For a single episode, the prognosis is excellent; For multiple episodes, fairly good;
- Success depends upon the patient's acceptance that the symptoms are a direct result of a psychological problem.

For Further Information, Please Call:

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