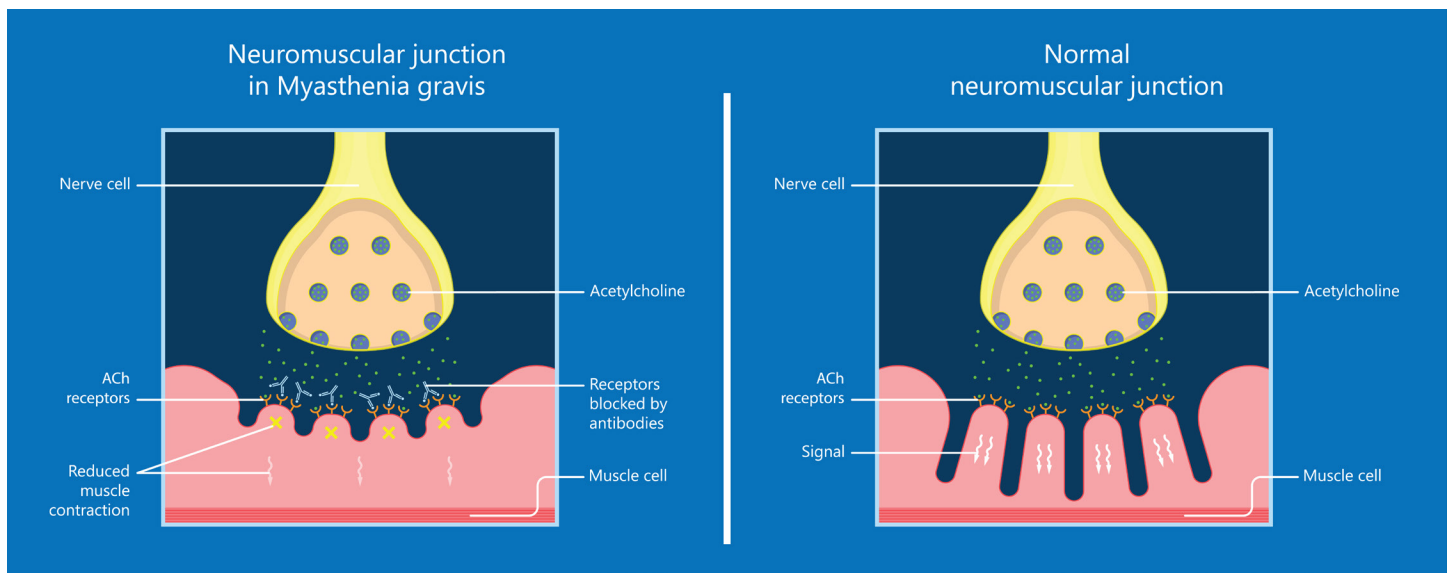


Living With Myasthenia Gravis

What Are Myasthenia Gravis and Generalized Myasthenia Gravis?

Myasthenia gravis -- or MG -- is a chronic (long-term) autoimmune condition. An autoimmune condition means there's a problem with your immune system -- your body's natural defense system -- and it attacks healthy tissues and organs by mistake. MG causes weakness and rapid fatigue (tiredness) in certain muscles, including those that help you breathe and move your face, arms, and legs. As MG becomes more severe and more muscles become affected, it's called generalized myasthenia gravis, or gMG.



MG happens when signals from your nerves can't reach the muscles they control. Your nerves communicate with your muscles by releasing chemicals called neurotransmitters. In most people with MG, special proteins called antibodies that your immune system makes interfere with the neurotransmitter acetylcholine (ACh). Antibodies may also block a protein called muscle-specific receptor tyrosine kinase that helps build the area where your nerves and muscles meet (the neuromuscular junction). In both cases, the antibodies interrupt the signals between your nerves and muscles.

MG can happen in both men and women and at any age, including in childhood. But it most often affects adult women under 40 and men over 60. And while MG and gMG may be severe in some people, most can expect to live just as long as someone who doesn't have the condition.

Symptoms of MG and gMG

In MG, muscle weakness can be different for everyone, but it's often worse after the muscle is used and then better after resting. Muscles that are frequently affected include those that control your eyes and eyelids, face and throat, and neck and limbs.

The symptoms of MG may come and go, but they can often get worse over time. MG and gMG have similar symptoms, such as:

- Blurred or double vision, eyelid drooping
- Changed facial expression
- Trouble chewing, swallowing, breathing, or speaking
- Trouble walking or holding your head up
- Arm, hand, and finger weakness
- Fatigue

The most serious complication is a life-threatening condition called myasthenia crisis. This is where extreme weakness of the muscles that help you breathe makes them unable to do their job. Myasthenia crisis requires immediate medical attention.



Treatment Is Available

While there's no cure for MG, there are treatments that can help manage symptoms and improve your quality of life. Some people may even go into temporary or permanent remission where muscle weakness disappears completely. But others may continue to have symptoms and can even progress to gMG. gMG that doesn't respond to treatment is called refractory.

Making a treatment plan with your doctor can help you achieve your goals. During treatment, your doctor will check your symptoms to see how well your treatment is working and for any side effects that may happen. If one treatment

doesn't work or stops working, or side effects are too severe, there may be other treatments you can try. Be sure to track your symptoms and any side effects so you can discuss them with your doctor. Together, you can make a treatment plan that best fits your goals and individual needs and preferences.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Questions you can ask your doctor about MG and gMG can include:

- What can I do to help manage my symptoms and improve my quality of life?
- What treatments are available, and what are their possible side effects?
- Are there any lifestyle changes I should make?
- What should I do if I start to feel stressed or depressed?
- Where can I find more information and resources?