Relapsing Polychondritis Awareness & Support
Charity No: 1206767

RARE. OFTEN MISDIAGNOSED & UNDERDIAGNOSED.

Could this be Relapsing Polychondritis?

Relapsing Polychondritis (RP) is a rare immune mediated inflammatory disorder that may result in damage and destruction of cartilaginous tissues. Be suspicious that the patient in front of you might have Relapsing Polychondritis even though it is a rare disease.

CLINICAL RED FLAGS

- Ear chondritis: Red, inflamed and painful - sparing the earlobe
- Nasal chondritis: Nose pain, saddle nose deformity
- Airway/Respiratory: Breathlessness on exertion, hoarse voice, stridor, stenosis
- Ocular: episcleritis, scleritis
- Inflammatory arthritis
- Audiovestibular: hearing loss, tinnitus, vertigo

3–5

years average delay to diagnosis

0.71

patients per million population per year in the UK

DIAGNOSIS & REFERRAL

Diagnosis is based on clinical presentation, alongside lab tests and imaging studies as appropriate. CRP can be normal. Biopsies are not routinely required. Where tracheal involvement is suspected, a dynamic CT scan (inspiration & expiration) is recommended.

FURTHER CLINICAL INFORMATION

Understanding Relapsing Polychondritis

What is Relapsing Polychondritis?

Relapsing Polychondritis (RP) is a rare, autoimmune condition which has significant delays in diagnosis and treatment. Airway involvement may cause significant morbidity and mortality due to organ damage. RP has an episodic pattern with periods of intense inflammation and periods of remission.

Treatment approach

Initial treatment typically includes corticosteroids such as prednisolone. Depending on disease severity and organ involvement, additional treatment may include anti-inflammatories, immunosuppressants, or biologic therapies. In some cases, surgical intervention may be required to manage airway, ear, or joint complications. A multidisciplinary approach involving rheumatology, ENT, ophthalmology, and respiratory specialists is recommended. Treatment should be overseen by a specialist experienced in autoimmune or connective tissue disorders.

For your patient

Relapsing Polychondritis Awareness & Support - We offer free resources, peer support, research papers and webinars by leading RP specialists for newly diagnosed patients and their families.

We hold a database of RP experienced clinicians across the UK, contact us for details.

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This information leaflet was reviewed by leading RP specialists from UK & Europe. (May 2026) Contact: info@relapsingpolychondritis.org