

Notalgia Paresthetica

At a glance

- Sensory neuropathic syndrome of the localized area of skin of the back
- May include localized burning, pain, tenderness, or itch of a small patch of the mid back
- May be associated with a poorly circumscribed tan or hyperpigmented patch (classically, under the scapula)
- Chronic condition
- Causes discomfort and nuisance to affected patients
- Not life threatening
- Common disorder which remains largely under-diagnosed
- No uniformly effective treatment available

Pathophysiology

The exact pathophysiology of the cutaneous finding remain unknown. Although the etiology of nostalgia paresthetica is unclear, two of the multiple proposed possible mechanisms include 1) localized increased sensory innervation of the affected skin areas and 2) neuropathy from degenerative cervico-thoracic disc disease or direct nerve impingement.

Who is at risk?

Notalgia paresthetica is more common in adulthood, typically in ages 40-80.

Treatment

No uniformly effective treatment. Gentle skin care usually is recommended (i.e., keep soap off the area, don't rub/scratch, use thick emollients such a plain petroleum jelly).