### DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

**Managing Muscular Dystrophy**

If you or your child have muscular dystrophy, it's important to be involved in your medical care to help optimize your strength and functions. Asking the right questions during your conversation with a doctor will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

**Vocabulary to Know**
Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here’s what they mean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Atrophy</strong></td>
<td>With muscular dystrophy, muscles can decrease in number and each muscle can become smaller, resulting in a thin appearance, often with decreased strength.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hypertrophy</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes, arms and legs may appear larger than normal. This can result from hypertrophy, which is excess muscle, or it can result from weight gain and muscle loss due to a combination of muscle disease and lack of exercise.</td>
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<td><strong>Dysarthria</strong></td>
<td>Difficulty in using the muscles that control speech is described as dysarthria. Words can sound slurred and some sounds may be hard to pronounce. This is distinct from aphasia, which is difficulty with language.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dysphagia</strong></td>
<td>Difficulty controlling the swallowing muscles is described as dysphagia. It can result in drooling, choking, or coughing when eating. Dysphagia can be dangerous if food goes down the wrong pipe and into the lungs. Often, it is best to manage dysphagia by eating slowly and sticking to soft foods. Swallowing therapy can help optimize the muscles as well.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Myopathy</strong></td>
<td>All muscle diseases are described as myopathy, including muscular dystrophies. There are a variety of myopathies, and it may require some testing to distinguish one from another.</td>
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<td><strong>Dystrophin</strong></td>
<td>Dystrophin is a protein that is part of a muscle. Muscular dystrophy is caused by an irregularity in the dystrophin protein, which causes diminished muscle function.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Neuropathy</strong></td>
<td>Nerve disease is described as neuropathy. Often, nerve disease causes weakness, and it can be distinguished from muscular dystrophy using diagnostic tests.</td>
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**Autonomic Symptoms**

The autonomic nervous system controls the muscles that power breathing, digestive organs, blood pressure, heart function, pupils of the eyes, and sweating. Myopathy generally affects the skeletal muscles, which are the muscles that control voluntary (on purpose) movement of the body. Some types of muscular dystrophy can also affect autonomic function, resulting in problems like constipation or diarrhea, abnormal sweating, or blood pressure irregularities.

Learn more at www.verywellhealth.com
Questions to Ask
These questions will help start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage muscular dystrophy.

About Symptoms
- Can my muscular dystrophy affect other parts of my body besides my muscles?
- Should I be concerned that my condition will make it hard for me to breathe?

About Causes & Risk Factors
- Could my muscular dystrophy have been caused by a nutrition deficit or a toxin that I was exposed to?
- Is there a way I can find out if my condition is genetic or if other family members might have it?

About Diagnosis
- There are so many types of muscle disease, how can I be sure which one I have?
- Do I need to have a muscle biopsy?

About Treatment
- Are there vitamins or other natural products that I can use?
- Are there any medications that can strengthen my muscles?

About Living With Muscular Dystrophy
- Will I ever need to use a wheelchair to get around?
- Can physical therapy help?
- Is it safe for me to exercise?
- Are there any foods that I need to avoid?