



Refeeding Syndrome

Refeeding Syndrome is a potentially life threatening condition that occurs when people who are severely malnourished undergo aggressive refeeding, particularly if it involves high carbohydrate loads. Refeeding syndrome generally arises within the first two weeks of introducing nutrition. when electrolyte and fluid shifts occur (specifically, a rapid fall in phosphate, magnesium and potassium). This leads to a number of systematic pathologies, including fluid retention and increased cardiac workload. Cardiac arrest and sudden death may result.

Risk factors for refeeding syndrome:

- Malnourishment warranting intensive refeeding
- No oral nutrition for 7-10 days prior to refeeding
- Severely underweight
- Abnormal electrolytes before refeeding (phosphate, potassium and magnesium)
- Prolonged QTc interval on ECG
- Prolonged malnutrition or rapid weight loss (ie more than 1kg per week over several weeks) regardless of weight

Tips to avoid refeeding syndrome

- Nutrition should be increased slowly (whilst assuring adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals) under the guidance and supervision of a medical expert who specializes in eating disorders
- Monitoring for such things as heart functioning and electrolytes should take place
- Vitamin and mineral supplementation should also be completed

For further information it is recommended that specialised medical expertise be sought