



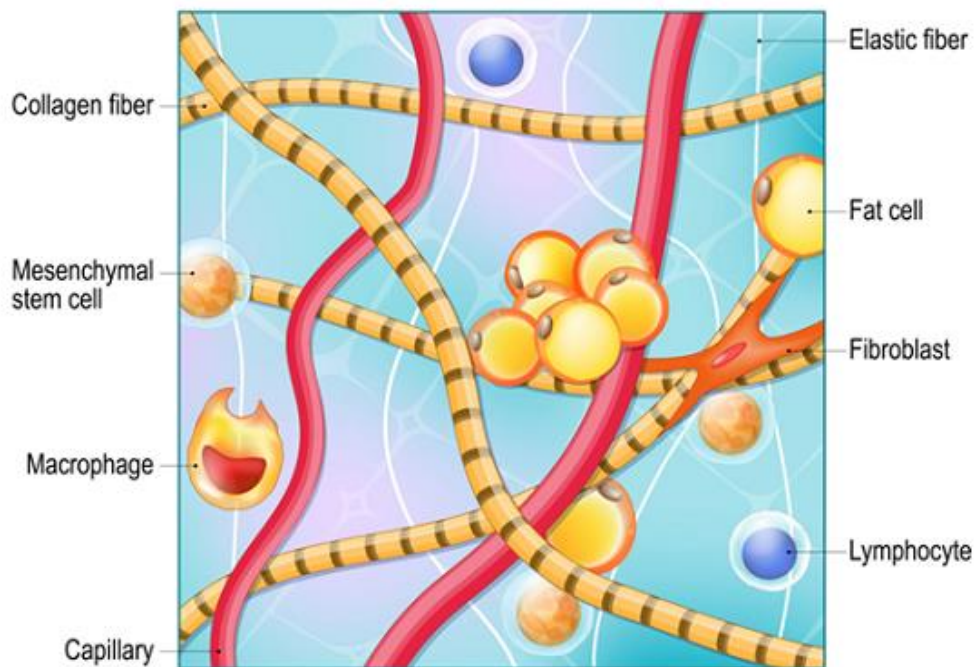
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Blog #7 The "Soft Skeleton" Problem

Heritable Connective Tissue Disorders (HCTDs) are caused by the body making **collagen incorrectly**.

1. **Collagen is the Body's "Glue"** Collagen is described as the body's "soft skeleton." It is found in every organ, blood vessel, and nerve. It gives your body its shape and holds your organs in place. When your body creates faulty collagen, it leads to disorders like Marfan syndrome, Stickler syndrome, and the most common one: **Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (hEDS)**.

Connective tissue





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2. Ruling Out Danger It is critical for doctors to figure out exactly which disorder a patient has. While most patients have hEDS (which is painful but **not** fatal), there are rare types (like Vascular EDS) that can be life-threatening. Doctors need to rule those out first to ensure the patient is safe.

3. The Name Matters Less Than the Treatment There is currently no genetic test for hEDS. Doctors often argue over labels—whether to call it hEDS, Hypermobility Spectrum Disorder (HSD), or the older term "Joint Hypermobility Syndrome." The specific label doesn't matter much because the **treatment is the same**: focus on relieving the pain, fatigue, and functional issues.

4. The "Hallmark" Symptoms For most patients (especially young women), the biggest clue isn't just flexible joints—it is **Autonomic Dysfunction**. This means the body's automatic systems are out of sync. Common symptoms include:

- **POTS:** A racing heart when standing up.
- **Chronic Fatigue:** Feeling exhausted all the time.
- **Thermoregulatory issues:** Sweating too much or trouble controlling body temperature.
- **Easy bruising.**

In short, while flexible joints are a sign, the internal symptoms (like heart rate and fatigue) are often what bother the patient the most and lead to the diagnosis.

It is important to seek out a clinician with expertise in EDS to make an accurate diagnosis and create a treatment plan. One of the nation's leading centers is Franklin Cardiovascular Associates, under the direction of Nicholas DePace, MD, FACC. They are located in Sicklerville, New Jersey. franklincardiovascular.com, (856) 589-6034.