
Erythema multiforme

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Erythema multiforme

Minor erythema multiforme of the hands (note the bleached centers of the lesion)

Speciality
dermatology

eMedicine
derm/137

Synonym

Lyell syndrome; Stevens-Johnson syndrome; Erythema multiforme minor; Erythema multiforme major

Medical Notice

[editing data in Wikidata]

Erythema multiforme or polymorphous erythema is a skin disease of acute or chronic recurrent presentation, of an immunological nature, characterized by erythematous lesions of the skin and vesicles or blisters of the mucous membranes. It can be triggered after infection or exposure to drugs.¹

Epidemiology

Erythema multiforme can occur at any age, most often between the second and third decade of life. It is rare in children. The overall annual incidence ranges from 0.8 to 6 per million per year. It occurs more in men than in women, in a ratio of 3:2.1?

Aetiology

The etiology of erythema multiforme is unknown. However, its occurrence has been associated with a number of infections. The most frequent association is with Herpes simplex infection, followed by hepatitis and infectious mononucleosis. Some bacterial infections (commonly Mycoplasma) and fungal diseases are also associated. Listed below are the infections that have been associated with the diseasead.1?

Infections triggering erythema multiforme

VirusBacteriaFungiProtozoa

HIV

Hemolytic ? streptococcus

Coccidiomycosis

Malaria

Adenovirus

Brucellosis

Dermatophytosis

Trichomoniasis

Virus Coxsackie

Diphtheria

Histoplasmosis

Virus de Epstein-Barr

Mycobacterium

Hepatitis A, B and C

Mycoplasma pneumoniae

Herpes simplex 1 and 2

Tularemia

Herpes zoster

Typhoid fever

Influenza type A

Lymphogranuloma inguinale

Lymphogranuloma venereum

Parotitis

Poliomyelitis

Psittacosis

Rickettsia

Vaccinia

Smallpox

Other causes include reactions to drugs, most commonly to sulfas, phenytoin, barbiturates, penicillins, and allopurinol, or a host of internal ailments. Persistent (chronic) erythema multiforme has been linked to the ingestion of benzoates in natural and artificial forms, including benzoic acid, which exists naturally in some fruits, and sodium benzoate, a common food preservative.

Clinical picture

The condition ranges from a mild, self-limiting rash of minor erythema multiforme² to a severe, deadly form known as Erythema multiforme major (or Erythema multiforme majus) that also involves mucous membranes. This severe form may be related to Stevens–Johnson syndrome. The mild form is much more common than the severe form. The diagnosis is confirmed by biopsy. The mild form usually presents with mild pruritus (although it can also be very severe), red patches, symmetrically arranged and from the extremities. It often takes on the appearance of classic lesion on target,³ with a red ring around a pale center. Usually the resolution occurs between 7 and 10 days. Individuals with persistent (chronic) erythema multiforme often present in the first week with a painful form at a site of injury, for example, a minor scratch or abrasion. Irritation or pressure even from clothing can cause erythema pain to continue to expand along its margins for weeks or months, long after the original pain in the center heals.

Treatment

Erythema multiforme is self-limiting, often disappears spontaneously and does not require any treatment. The appropriateness of glucocorticoid therapy may be uncertain, as it is difficult to determine whether the course will be self-limiting.⁴

Reaction of Erythema multiforme to an antibiotic.

"Eritema multiforme major" (Stevens–Johnson syndrome); which resembles "erythema multiforme"

See also

Erythema multiforme major
Erythema multiforme minor
Toxic epidermal necrolysis
Stevens-Johnson syndrome
Fixed drug rash

References

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External links

Clinical Guide for Erythema Multiforme

Control of authorities

Wikimedia

Projects Data: Q1363732
Media: Erythema multiforme

BNF
identifiers
: 12261693r (data)
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Britannica
dictionaries and encyclopedias
: url
Medical identifiers
DOID: DOID:0050185
ICD-9: 695.1
ICD-10: L51
ICD-9-MC: 695.10
ICD-10-MC: L51
DiseasesDB: 4450
MedlinePlus: 000851
eMedicine: 1122915
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