



“Help me, I’m breaking out!”

Karen Binkley, MD, FRCPC

Notes on Eileen

Age: 45

Presentation: Presents with repeated episodes of allergic reactions.

- ✓ Eileen’s symptoms include urticaria, chest tightness and wheezing
- ✓ She has been to the ED on three separate occasions for hypotension; a blood pressure of 80/20 mmHg was documented on the last occasion
- ✓ She responds to antihistamines and adrenaline
- ✓ She now carries epinephrine
- ✓ There is no obvious common trigger, such as food, latex exposure or exercise
- ✓ Symptoms often, but not always, occur after eating
- ✓ Symptoms occasionally occur during, but are not limited to, exercise
- ✓ Eileen is otherwise well

Medical history:

- ✓ She has a history of chronic intermittent urticaria of two years’ duration
- ✓ There is no previous atopic history
- ✓ Eileen’s family history is negative for atopy

Physical exam:

- ✓ Unremarkable, except for hyperpigmented macules on her torso, which urticate with pressure

What do you suspect?

Final diagnosis:


Mastocytosis

- ✓ Eileen's serum tryptase is elevated at 20 nanograms per millilitre
- ✓ Her skin biopsy is consistent with mastocytosis

Further investigations:

- ✓ The complete blood cell count differential is normal
- ✓ The bone scan is normal
- ✓ The bone marrow biopsy shows no evidence of marrow involvement

Further management:

- ✓ A non-sedating, H1 blocker and H2 blocker administered regularly
- ✓ Epinephrine should be available at all times
- ✓ Beta-blockers and angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors must be avoided
- ✓ Special care is to be used with agents capable of causing mast cell degranulation, including opiates, radio contrast material and general anesthetics
- ✓ Leukotriene receptor antagonist and cromolyn may be beneficial
- ✓ Imatinib may be appropriate in some patients; special investigations are required 

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Upcoming cases...

- ✓ **February:** Seasonal allergic rhinoconjunctivitis
- ✓ **March:** Shellfish allergy