

CARING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH IGA VASCULITIS

What Is IgA Vasculitis?

IgA vasculitis (formerly known as Henoch-Schönlein purpura) is a disease in which small blood vessels throughout the body become inflamed (irritated). These blood vessels may be in the skin, joints, stomach, or kidneys.

This disease is also called allergic purpura or anaphylactoid purpura. It affects mostly younger children (usually boys), but older children and adults may also get it.

Most people recover completely, but recovery may take several months. Also, because of possible kidney problems, regular follow-up blood pressure checks and urine tests will be needed for several months.

What Causes IgA Vasculitis?

The cause isn't fully known. It usually occurs a few weeks after a strep throat infection or after a cold or other viral infections. Substances (antibodies) produced by the body's immune system to fight the initial infection may contribute to its development.

What Are the Symptoms of IgA Vasculitis?

The first symptom may be small purplish spots (purpura), usually on the buttocks and legs. The ankles are always affected. The rash may first look like hives but usually changes to purplish or brownish bruises in 1 to 2 days.

Joints, usually knees and ankles, are painfully swollen. The pain may be so severe that walking is hard.

Other symptoms are pain in the belly (abdomen), nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and blood in the stool or urine. Adolescent girls and women may have painful periods.

How Is IgA Vasculitis Diagnosed?

The health care provider will examine the skin and may take a sample of it for study with a microscope. Urine and blood samples may also be taken.

If the health care provider thinks that there may be a kidney problem, a kidney biopsy may be done. This biopsy involves using a hollow needle to remove a tiny bit of tissue from the kidney and sending it to a laboratory for study.

How Is IgA Vasculitis Treated?

This disease goes away by itself. Symptoms may flare up and disappear several times. The health care provider may prescribe medicine for the pain. Over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen, naproxen, or acetaminophen, may also be used to control pain and fever.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing IgA Vasculitis

- ✓ **DO** encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids and eat a normal diet as much as possible.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider immediately if the abdominal pain gets worse or the bowel movements (stool) or urine contain blood; if there is puffiness, especially around the face or eyes; or if your child hasn't urinated in more than 12 hours.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider immediately if your child appears very sick.
- ⊗ **DON'T** give aspirin to children, because it may cause a serious illness called Reye syndrome and may cause increased bleeding from the blood vessels.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- American College of Rheumatology: Tel: (404) 633-3777; Website:
<http://www.rheumatology.org>
- American Academy of Dermatology: Tel: (866) 503-SKIN (7546); Website:
<http://www.aad.org>

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