

HYPERSENSITIVITY VASCULITIS

WHAT IS HYPERSENSITIVITY VASCULITIS?

Hypersensitivity vasculitis (HV) is often used to describe different types of vasculitis related to drug reactions, skin disorders or allergic vasculitis; however this is not always the correct use of the term.

Given the wide range of symptoms, the varying definitions and frequent incorrect use of the term, the American College of Rheumatology made a list of criteria for the classification of HV. Three or more of these criteria are needed to determine that a patient with some form of vasculitis is defined as specifically having HV. The criteria are:

1. older than 16 years of age
2. use of a drug before the development of symptoms
3. skin rash
4. biopsy of the skin rash that shows neutrophils, a type of white blood cells, around a small vessel

SYMPTOMS

The major symptoms of HV, in addition to a skin rash, are joint pains and increasing size of lymph nodes. Lymph nodes are located in several places, but particularly along the neck, and supply special cells to the bloodstream that help remove bacteria from the body. In most patients, symptoms begin 7 to 10 days after the exposure to the drug or infection, but can be as short as two to seven days in some people. Symptoms of kidney involvement may not be noticed by the patient, but can be evaluated by a doctor by looking at a urine sample for small amounts of blood and protein

TREATMENT

If a drug may have caused the HV, then discontinuation of that specific drug usually leads to the disappearance of symptoms within a few days or weeks. If an infection may have caused the hypersensitivity, then treatment of the infection usually results in the disappearance of symptoms. In some patients, Drugs used to manage the skin rash and joint pains associated with HV might include corticosteroids and/or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.