

HENOCH-SCHÖNLEIN PURPURA (HSP)

What is Henoch-Schönlein purpura?

Henoch-Schönlein purpura (HSP) is a systemic vasculitis that causes the blood vessels in the skin to become inflamed, causing red spots.

What causes HSP?

There is no known cause of HSP, but it is not contagious.

Who gets HSP?

HSP occurs more often in children than in adults. Many cases follow an upper respiratory tract infection (infection in your sinuses and /or lungs). Half of affected children are under age five, although kidney involvement is more likely to be severe in older children. Compared to children, adults have more severe and frequent kidney involvement.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms occur over a period of days to several weeks: skin rash, joint aches and pains, usually in knees and ankles, occasional swelling and abdominal pain. Kidney involvement is common in 30-70 % of patients.

Gastrointestinal symptoms are present in the majority of patients including abdominal pain associated with vomiting.

How is HSP diagnosed?

The symptoms of HSP make it easier to diagnose in children. Kidney biopsy is another method to establish the diagnosis. It is used for patients in whom the diagnosis is uncertain or in whom there is evidence of more severe kidney involvement.

What is the prognosis?

The overall outcome is good in most patients. All of the manifestations of active HSP usually resolve spontaneously, although recurrent episodes of skin rash and hematuria may be seen.

Among those with kidney involvement, only a minority have persistent disease. The kidney prognosis is excellent in most patients. However, some patients will have persistent protein in their urine, high blood pressure and renal insufficiency. It is estimated that HSP accounts for approximately 3% of cases of end-stage kidney disease in children.

What is the treatment?

Most symptoms go away on their own. Those that continue may be treated with steroids.

Children with kidney disease may be treated with steroids and other drugs.

Plasmapheresis has also been used in a number of patients with severe disease although its efficacy is uncertain. Intravenous immune globulin has been tried in a small number of patients with progressive decline in kidney function.

What is Vasculitis?

Vasculitis is an inflammation of the blood vessels, arteries, veins or capillaries. Vasculitis is a family of diseases. The cause of vasculitis is unknown, but through research and treatment, outcomes have improved significantly over the past 20 years.

Continued research is essential for further advances in these diseases, which can be life-threatening.

About the Vasculitis Foundation

The Vasculitis Foundation (VF) is the largest international patient support group for people with vasculitis.

Through its website, newsletter, brochures, informational materials, medical consultants, symposia and chapters, VF raises awareness and educates its patients, family members and friends.



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www.VasculitisFoundation.org

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