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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“Ooh, aah, ouch. My body is paining, I feel feverish, and to boot it, I have a terrible headache”. These are some allergic symptoms that a lazy person may develop at the mere mention of any work. In day to day parlance, as a lazy person is said to be allergic to hard work; so is a miser, to expenditure. In medical terminology, “allergy” means an unpleasant reaction.

It is estimated that approximately 10 to 15 percent of the population suffers from an allergic disease, sometimes or the other in its life-span and this figure is on the rise. One may have come across someone who is allergic to a particular food-item, say egg or milk; whereas some other who is allergic to a drug or a chemical, say Aspirin; and still some other, who suffers from allergic symptoms whenever he wears a particular fabric. One may be surprised that someone can be allergic to water too ! It is quite evident from the above, that a substance which causes allergy in an allergic individual eg. water, egg, milk etc., does not cause any harm to a normal healthy individual. Due to allergic reaction, a patient of allergy may develop itching, sneezing, rashes, colic, diarrhoea or asthma etc., when he comes in contact with these allergens, at times even in minute quantities.

Baby X, daughter of a flour-mill owner, suffers from asthmatic symptoms after her father returns from the mill. Every night after dinner, she suffers an asthmatic attack. The child is very much attached to her father and whenever he is late to return, she waits for him for dinner. Notable here is that, she does not have attacks on the days her father is at home or when he returns home from any place other than the flour-mill. The cause for the little girl's suffering is flour-dust being brought to her by her own father. The girl is allergic to flour-dust, because of which she gets asthmatic attacks.

A beautician's son suffers from sneezing and running nose whenever he visits his mother's beauty parlour.

One's visit to his friend's house, who has a pet , may be followed by asthmatic, rhinitic or conjunctivitic symptoms. His friend's pet may be the source of his allergic symptoms.

In all the above mentioned examples, the patient can be saved a lots of suffering if he or his parents have basic knowledge about allergies. Allergies can be prevented and treated more effectively if the patient has an understanding of the allergic phenomena.

## CHAPTER III

# ALLERGENS

Allergen is a substance which causes/initiates allergic process or reaction. Now, the question arises what substance(s) can be classified as an allergen ? Well, almost anything can cause allergy. An allergen can be classified into various categories according to the following :

1. Site of its action in the human body ;
2. Its origin ; and
3. Place of its contact.

**On the basis of site of action** : On the basis of place of its action, an allergen can be classified into :

a) Cutaneous allergen - An allergen which cause allergic manifestations after coming in contact with the skin falls in this category.

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**On the basis of its origin** : On the basis of the its origin, an allergen can be classified into the following :

a) Allergens of animal origin - Animal dander, dust mite,

eggs etc., are examples of allergens of animal origin.

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g) Physical agents - Temperature (cold and heat), Sun etc., are some agents which do not come under any of the above categories, but these do cause allergic symptoms, and are called as pseudo-allergens.

**On the basis of place of contact** : On the basis of where one is most likely to come in contact with the allergen, an allergen can be classified into the following two types :

a) Indoor allergen - An allergen which is present inside one's home and with which one comes in contact indoors; for example, house-dust , kitchen smoke, bed-bug etc., comes under this category.

b) Outdoor allergen - An allergen which is present outdoors and with which one comes in contact outdoors, comes under this category. For example, pollens, industrial smoke etc.

## CHAPTER IV

### SYMPTOMS AND SITES

Where does allergy occur? What organs and sites of the body are generally and easily affected by allergens? What symptoms are produced due to allergy in these organs? Answers to these questions are given in the following table :

Part of the body	Symptoms
Head	1. Headache (some migraines are said to be associated with allergies).
Eye	1. Itching / Irritation; 2. Lacrimation (watering of the eye); 3. Redness; and 4. Oedema (swelling) of the eye-lid(s).
Nose	1. Itching; 2. Stuffiness; 3. Running nose; 4. Sneezing; and 5. Nasal obstruction (occurring intermittently).

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## CHAPTER IX

### SURGERY AND ALLERGY

A patient who suffers from any kind of allergy requires special care and consideration when he undergoes any surgery. Adequate care must be taken to avoid precipitation or aggravation of the allergic symptoms of the patient. A detailed pre-operative history with special emphasis on the following should be provided to the surgeon and the anesthetist by the patient / his relatives / attendants and the family physician of the patient / physician treating the patient:

1. Medicines taken by the patient for controlling his allergic symptoms and the effectiveness of each; and
2. All the drugs and medicines which the patient is allergic to.

Pre-operative medication should be chosen to avoid aggravation of allergic symptoms of the patient.

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Proper and adequate pre-operative care is of prime importance to conduct a safe operation with minimal post-operative complications in a patient suffering from any allergic problem.

## CHAPTER XI

### ALLERGY TO CHEMICALS

Every house is full of chemicals in the form of cosmetics, deodorants, detergents, soaps, boot polishes, cleansing agents etc., which can cause allergy. A detergent or a soap, mainly, causes skin allergy on the hand(s). One's talcum powder may be responsible for his repeated attacks of asthma. Similarly, perfumes for repeated bouts of sneezing. Allergy to mosquito and fly repellents has also been reported. Beauticians, painters, washermen, workers of chemical factories come under high risk of suffering from allergies caused by various chemicals because of the nature of their occupation having a high probability of multiple exposure to allergy causing chemicals. Any chemical used as a food preservative or as a colouring agent or as a flavouring agent can cause allergy. Tartazine, a colouring agent used by soft drink industry to give a yellowish colour, is known to cause allergy. Preservatives, such as benzoates, metabisulfites etc., which are used in tinned foods, dry fruits etc., can be harmful to an allergic individual.

Even a commonly used drug, such as Aspirin, can cause allergic reaction. It is estimated that about 3% of adult population is sensitive to Aspirin. Allergy to Penicillin is well known. In a highly sensitive patient, allergic reaction may be even seen on the introduction of trial dose of Penicillin. Allergy to drug(s), unfortunately, can not be predicted. There

has been increase in the number of drug allergy cases over the past few years. This increase can be attribute to :

- (a) Increase in the number of new drugs;
- (b) Increase in the habit of self-medication.

Many a time, the patient confuses with the reaction due to over dosage of the drug and thinks that he is allergic to the drug. This mostly happens when the patient has a habit of taking the medicines himself without consulting the doctor.

### **LIVING WITH CHEMICAL ALLERGIES**

Allergy to chemicals can be prevented. The idea is to avoid exposure to the offending chemical in every possible way. The patient should also avoid exposure to any chemical which is known to cause allergy. Some important steps for living with allergies to chemicals are :

- (a) The patient should avoid cosmetics, such as perfumes, scented sprays, talcum powders, etc., which cause him discomfort.
- (b) As far as possible, one should use soap and detergent that causes no harm but if symptoms appear, he should stop using the soap and consult the doctor.
- (c) Quit smoking and avoid smokers. Aldehydes contained in cigarettes can cause gastro-intestinal allergies

and chronic urticaria.

(d) Cow's milk may contain Penicillin given to the cow, to which a person highly allergic to Penicillin may react.

(e) Allergy to drugs, as mentioned above, is not predictable. One should not take any medicine without consulting the doctor. Even vitamins can cause allergy in a patient. Hence, it is advisable not to take any medicine, not even vitamins, without the doctor's advice. Remember self-medication can be harmful.

(f) The patient should avoid exposure to environment filled with odors and smoke of incense, dhoops, aggarbatti (joss stick), mosquito and fly repellents, industrial fumes and smoke from vehicular traffic.

(g) A patient who is allergic to Aspirin should avoid any food item which contain salicylates. A list of such foods is given below.

(i) Foods containing natural salicylates :

(1) Apricots;

(2) Berries (raspberries, strawberries);

(3) Cherries;

(4) Grapes;

(5) Peaches;

(6) Plums etc.

(ii) Foods with synthetic salicylates :

(1) Chewing gums;

(2) Candy;

(3) Jams;

(4) Ice creams;

(5) Soft drinks etc.

One should remember freshly prepared home made food is free from preservatives and one always know what he is eating.

### **SOME HOMOEOPATHIC MEDICINES**

Nux vomica is (usually) the first medicine given to a patient who comes to Homoeopathic school after taking medicines of other schools. It can be given in 30, 200 or 1000 potency depending upon the case. Nux vomica acts wonderfully in removing the effects (allergic or due to over dosage or side effects) of the drug abused. If one is allergic

to a certain chemical or a drug, he should stop taking the drug and should avoid exposure to that chemical. He should take Nux vomica in 30 potency. At times one may benefit from a single dose of a Nux vomica. Often Nux vomica is to be followed up by other remedies for a satisfactory results.

The best medicine in chemical and drug allergy cases is “the symptomatic antidote”. Symptomatic antidote is a medicine selected according to the symptoms manifested by the patient. Symptoms due to allergy to drug / chemical are also taken into consideration while selecting the symptomatic antidote. Given below is a list of chemicals / drugs and medicines useful in the cases of allergic symptoms / side effects / symptoms due to abuse of these chemicals / drugs :

**CHEMICAL/DRUG**

**MEDICINES**

Anaesthetic vapors  
(chloroform)

Acetic acid ; Hepar sulphuris ; Amyl nitrite Q through inhalation.

Aspirin (and other similar drugs)

Arnica; Carbo veg; Lachesis; Magnesia phosphorica.

Cosmetics

Bovista.

Iron

Hepar sulphuris ;Pulsatilla.

Cod liver oil	Hepar sulphuris .
Pickels	Nux vomica.
Turpentine	Nux moschata.
Tobacco	Arsenic; Ignatia; Nux vomica; Pulsatilla;Spongia; Staphisagria; Spigellia.
For dyspepsia from tobacco	Nux vomica.
For sore throat from tobacco	Calcarea phosphorica .
Magnesia (diarrhoea from magnesia)	Nux vomica.

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## CHAPTER XXV

### URTICARIA

Urticaria is a common allergic skin eruption

characterised by localised patches of oedema. There are circumscribed raised white or erythematous (red or pinkish) weals of varying shape and size. There is itching in weals and it can be violent, driving the patient crazy. New fresh patches (weals) keep on appearing while the old ones disappear leaving no trace behind. They appear suddenly, remain for some days and then disappear. Urticaria associated with oedema of lips, eye-lids, mucus membranes of mouth and throat etc., is called angiodema. Urticaria can be caused by a variety of factors such as drugs, chemicals, pollen, moulds, infectants, foods etc.

### **LIVING WITH URTICARIA**

In urticaria, the mediator released is histamine. Its release is triggered by a variety of factors as mentioned above. The aim should be to avoid these factors. Some important tips to live with urticaria are as follows :

(a) If urticaria appears in a particular season, then it's cause may be certain pollens or moulds appearing in that season. Sensitivity tests (skin tests) aimed at diagnosing sensitivity to pollen and mould appearing in that season and co-relating the findings with the clinical history is a must for such a case. The patient may be benefited from a change of place. Another patient who will be benefited by a change of area is one in whom urticaria is being caused by chemical(s) present in the industrial fumes of the neighbouring atmosphere.

(b) If urticaria comes after eating a particular food then it should be avoided. Some important foods which can cause urticaria in sensitive individuals are :

- (i) Banana;
- (ii) Egg;
- (iii) Fish;
- (iv) Lobster;
- (v) Nut(s);
- (vi) Orange;
- (vii) Prawn;
- (viii) Straw berries;
- (ix) Tomato;
- (x) Wheat;
- (xi) Mango etc.

(c) Any food preservative, such as benzoic acid can cause urticaria. Similarly, any chemical used as colouring or flavouring agent can cause urticaria. The patient should take fresh home made food.

(d) Self medication should be avoided. The patient should consult doctor before taking any medicine. Aspirin, antibiotics like Penicillin and some laxatives may cause urticaria in a sensitive patient.

(e) Bacterial or viral infection may also be associated with urticaria. Hence, infected tooth, infected tonsil or any other infection should be immediately treated.

(f) Urticaria may follow an insect bite or sting. The symptoms tend to increase in intensity after repeated exposure to the insect. The patient should follow instructions given in chapter of INSECT ALLERGY (living with insect allergy).

(g) Stool examination is a must in every patient suffering from urticaria as intestinal parasites may be causing it. Deworming forms an important step of treatment in this patient.

(h) Any chemical in a cosmetic item can also cause urticaria. If this is the case, the patient should avoid using that particular cosmetic.

(i) Pseudo-allergens such as heat, sunlight etc.; and emotional disturbances can cause urticaria in a sensitive patient.

### **SOME HOMOEOPATHIC MEDICINES**

Some Homoeopathic medicines which are useful in urticaria are :

1. Antimonium crudum : It is used for urticaria with gastric derangements. There is itching when warm in bed and worse at night. Patient presents with white lumps with red areolae and itching. There is aggravation from acids, at night and from heat. Useful in 30 potency.

2. Apis mellifica : For urticaria with intolerable itching and burning and stinging pains, Apis is used. It is of help when urticaria appears after stings of insect. It is used for feeling of suffocation or for breathlessness with urticaria occurring as a result of cold or when this symptom is present during intermittent fever. Hard, red somewhat conical swellings like bee stings or stings of other insects, occurring usually on lower extremities below the knees, sometimes on the arms, rarely on other parts of the body. Long pinkish white blotches raised above skin which suddenly appear. There is aggravation from heat and from covering. Can be used in 6 and 30 potencies.

3. Arsenicum album : Urticaria, with burning and restlessness. It is of help when urticaria is caused by eating shellfish. This medicine is useful for weals attended with burning, itching and restlessness. It can be used in 6 or 30 potencies.

4. Calcarea Carbonicum : It is useful in chronic urticaria, which always disappears in cold, fresh air. Urticaria with intolerable itching, of children, especially fair, plump children. It is also useful for urticaria of children during teething period. Elevated red strips in tibial with severe itching and burning after rubbing. Useful in 30, 200 potencies.

5. Causticum : Chronic urticaria, coming out more fully in fresh air. There is aggravation from the heat of the bed. Itching, if not present comes from the heat of the bed.

Aggravation in clear fine weather. Useful in 30 potency.

6. Dulcumara : Dulcumara is used for urticaria from gastric disorders. Urticaria at night, especially when the nights are cool after a hot day or when the weather is changing from warm to cool and damp. Itching obliging one to scratch. After scratching there is burning. Every eruption is preceded by sensation of pricking over the whole body. Red rashes with itching, worse in damp weather. Patient is worse from warmth and better from cold. Can be used in 30 potency.

7. Hepar sulphuris : It is used for chronic and recurring urticaria. There is great sensitiveness to slightest touch. Patient cannot bear to be uncovered and wants to be rapped up warmly. Sweats day and night without relief. Urticaria, with violent itching and stinging disappears as heat begins. Itching before and during intermittent fever. Can be used in 30, 200 potencies.

8. Rhus toxicodendron : Rhus tox is used for urticaria during rheumatism, with chills and fever. There are vesicular eruptions. It is also used for urticaria after getting wet in rain. There is itching all over the body which is worse on hairy parts. Patient complaints of burning after scratching. There is aggravation in cold air. Useful in 30 potency.

9. Sulphur : Sulphur is useful in chronic cases. There is itching and burning sensation in the skin which gets

aggravated from the warmth of the bed. Useful in 30, 200 potencies.

10. *Urtica urens* : There is itching and burning of the skin, with skin feels as if scorched. Eruptions and itching disappear as soon as the patient lies down and reappear immediately after rising. Pale rash requiring constant rubbing. Fine stinging points, raised skin with white central spot and red areola, attended by stinging burning pains which is aggravated by rubbing the part. Useful in Q, 6 potencies. It can be used externally for local application in lotion form.

Other useful medicines : *Astac*, *Bovista*, *Copaiva*, *Natrum muriaticum*, *Nux vomica*, *Pulsatilla*, *Sepia*, *Skookum chuck* and *Terebinthina* etc.

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## **EPILOGUE**

### **ONE STEP AHEAD**

In today's life-style, one is being exposed to more and more potential allergens. The ever increasing smoke from

factories, vehicles etc.; acts as irritant, aggravating/ initiating many allergic problems. Many new chemicals which have entered , and are entering regularly, all aspects of human life are potential allergens. How can a allergic patient live a healthy life when he is being bombarded with potential allergens ?

ONE STEP AHEAD APPROACH is the answer. The patient should always remain one step ahead of his problem. Following table shows one step ahead position of the patient in respect of his problem.

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