

Acknowledgements

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Glove-related hand urticaria in the absence of Type I latex allergy

D. K. B. ARMSTRONG, H. R. SMITH AND R. J. G. RYCROFT

St John's Institute of Dermatology, St Thomas's Hospital, London SE1 7EH, UK

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Type I latex hypersensitivity has been an increasing problem in health care (1, 2).

Case Report

A 29-year-old hospital laboratory worker was referred from the Occupational Health Department with a 4-year history of pruritus and urtication of her hands related to wearing latex gloves. She gave no history of associated mucosal or systemic symptoms. Type I latex hypersensitivity was strongly suspected.

Prick tests with aqueous solutions prepared from a high-latex-protein glove and her own latex glove were negative. A use test with a wet latex glove caused pruritus within 10–15 min of application, but upon removal, no erythema or urtication was noted. It became apparent during the use test that the patient would normally scratch her hands with the gloves in situ in response to the pruritus.

The use test was repeated and the patient permitted to scratch her hands. Upon removal of the glove, a prominent urticarial, dermatographic response was noted.

Dermatographism could also be demonstrated at other skin sites. Standard patch testing showed no Type IV hypersensitivity to rubber chemicals. A diagnosis of glove irritation leading to a secondary dermatographic response was made. The patient tolerates vinyl gloves well.

Comment

A benign physical urticaria can mimic Type I latex allergy. Accurate assessment of all suspected cases of latex allergy remains important in view of the occupational implications of incorrect diagnosis.

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