

Key words: allergic contact dermatitis; angioedema; nail varnish; tosylamide/formaldehyde resin.

Case Report

A 47-year-old woman presented with a 3-year history of approximately monthly episodes of angioedema involving her eyelids and lips. There was no airway involvement, but she did report tongue swelling. Systemic treatments included various antihistamines and intermittent courses of steroids. Baseline blood tests were normal. Further investigations showed an isolated elevated antinuclear factor of $>1:400$ and slightly low C4 of 0.12. However, extractable nuclear antigens, immunoglobulin E, radioallergen sorbent test to house dust mite, yeast and fish, and mast cell tryptase were normal (at the time of swelling).

At the time of presentation, during an attack, she was noted to have dry scaly, purple discoloured swollen eyelids. This was in keeping with an allergic contact dermatitis. Patch testing was performed to the British baseline and cosmetic series and her own cosmetic products, using Finn[®] chambers secured with Micropore[™] tape. Results were read at D2 (when the tests were removed) and D4. At D2 and D4, she had a weakly positive (+) reaction to tosylamide/formaldehyde resin and at D4 a strongly positive (++) reaction to her own nail hardener.

Tosylamide/formaldehyde resin is an allergen commonly found in nail varnishes and nail hardeners. The patient recalled that the episodes of eyelid swelling coincided with nail varnish application and the tongue swelling with biting off her nail varnish! Since diagnosis, with avoidance of tosylamide/formaldehyde resin, she has been asymptomatic.

Discussion

The combination of swelling of eyelids, lips, and tongue is thought by many to be pathognomonic of angioedema. With desquamation and inflammation, however, contact dermatitis is the more likely diagnosis (1). Bizarre patterns of inflammation on the head and neck should prompt investigation by patch testing. Awareness of these patterns may avoid unnecessary treatments.

Recurrent tongue swelling: an unusual manifestation of allergic contact dermatitis

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Reference

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