

Case report

Allergy to poppy seed

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A patient with swelling of lips, tongue, oropharyngeal mucosa, and face, and respiratory difficulties was found to have an immediate-type hypersensitivity to poppy seed.

A 27-year-old woman without allergic heredity but with atopic dermatitis all her life was referred to the asthma and allergy unit, Akademiska Hospital, Uppsala, for Quinckes edema. She had never been able to eat tomato because of worsening of her eczema.

The patient had first experienced an allergic reaction after eating bread garnished with poppy seed when she was 10 years old. This was subsequently repeated several times. Her first relatively severe attack with breathing difficulties and swelling of her throat had appeared in Hungary 4 years before when eating ice cream with poppy seed topping. The same sort of reaction had appeared in India after eating Indian food with ingredients unknown to her. On both occasions she had had to seek medical care acutely.

A crude extract of ground poppy seed (1:10 w/v) was made up. It gave a skin prick test reaction of 9 × 10 mm in the patient, but did not give any reac-

tions in four nonallergic persons or five persons with different types of allergy. The patient also had a positive reaction to timothy (5 × 5), a strongly positive RAST reaction to poppy seed (class 5), and positive reactions to rice (class 3) and tomato (class 2).

The patient was prescribed as emergency medicines epinephrine spray, clemastine tablets, and methyl prednisolon tablets.

Discussion

Hypersensitivity to poppy seed is rare (1, 2) but important to recognize. In Western Europe this food ingredient usually is easily identified by the patient, but eating food strange to the patient might be a serious hazard. In addition to food, poppy seed is sometimes used for coloring of, for example, anti-tussive syrups.

References

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