

Might your gin tonic make you sick? Fixed drug eruption likely due to quinine in gin tonic

Aurora Gutiérrez González¹  | Sofía Alonso Juaristi² | Luis Fernandez Pellón²

¹Allergy Department, Hospital Universitario Marqués de Valdecilla, Santander, Spain

²Allergy Department, Hospital Sierrallana, Torrelavega, Spain

Correspondence

Aurora G. González, Hospital Universitario Marques de Valdecilla, Avenida Valdecilla Santander 39008, Spain.

Email: aurora_gutierrez1989@hotmail.com

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The fixed drug eruption (FDE) is a rare skin reaction characterized by the appearance of one or more skin lesions, generally in form of erythematous violaceous maculae, a few hours after the administration of a drug. It usually disappears when the drug or triggering agent is avoided and subsequently reappears in the same location upon re-exposure to the drug.

CASE REPORT

A 50-year-old man was referred from internal medicine to our allergy department for evaluation of erythematous skin lesions on his face, palms, and soles with subsequent desquamation (Figure 1). The patient

reported recurrences approximately every 4–6 weeks. The patient had no known allergies and worked as a turner in a foundry plant, and related his problem to the work environment. During one episode he was treated in the emergency department, and the doctor observed circular nonconfluent erythematoviolaceous lesions on the sole of the right foot and on the palm of the left hand.¹

Prick test only showed a mild sensitization to house dust mites. Blood test ruled out active infections. Patch testing was performed with the TRUE Test as baseline series, supplemented with a metal series due to the link established by the patient between his lesions and his work, but the result was negative except for a positive result



FIGURE 1 Circular nonconfluent erythematoviolaceous lesions on the face, the palm of the left hand, and on the sole of the right foot

to thiomersal (+: erythema and infiltration). A biopsy taken from a skin lesion showed vacuolar changes with lymphocyte exocytosis and abundant apoptotic bodies. In the superficial dermis there was a mild-to-moderate perivascular lymphocytic infiltrate, with few eosinophils and melanophagelial deposits. These findings were consistent with FDE.

During the final consultation, the patient reported a new episode of lesions in the same locations after drinking a gin tonic cocktail at home. He explained he did the “self-provocation” because he was highly suspicious of this drink.²

DISCUSSION

The patient was diagnosed with a fixed eruption due to consumption of gin tonic, which contains quinine. It was recommended that he should avoid drinking tonic water and also gin, and since then the patient remains asymptomatic. With this case study we also want to remind that the fixed eruption is not always caused by drugs, but food is sometimes responsible.³

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Aurora Gutierrez-Gonzalez: Conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; funding acquisition; investigation; methodology; resources;

software; supervision; validation; visualization; writing-original draft; writing-review and editing. **Sofía Alonso Juaristi:** Conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; funding acquisition; investigation; methodology; resources; software; supervision; validation; visualization; writing-original draft; writing-review and editing. **Luis Fernandez Pellon:** Writing-review and editing.

ORCID

Aurora Gutiérrez González  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9284-9973>

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