

PTH NEWSLETTER

Issue 18 January - March 2011

Performance Through Health



January 24 – 28 is Food Allergy and Intolerance Week

It is estimated that up to 45% of the UK population has a food intolerance¹

Food intolerance can be caused by several different factors; repeatedly eating the same food types such as pasta, bread and cereals, eating in a hurry without allowing our stomachs time to digest foods properly. Some people lack the proper enzymes needed to break foods down as with lactose intolerance where the enzyme lactase is not produced to break down the lactose (milk sugars) in milk. Another possible cause is additives in foods; these can be found in the form of sulphites which are added to processed foods to give them a longer shelf life.

Symptoms are often delayed and may take up to 48 hours to develop. They can be many and varied, from migraine to bloating, diarrhoea, lethargy and a general feeling of being unwell.

What can I do?

Monitor your diet closely for several weeks; keeping a symptoms diary can often be a clue as to what is causing the problem.

Often the foods that you are intolerant to are the ones that you crave and are eating more frequently.

There are often hidden ingredients in foods that you are not immediately aware of and you may have to become an ingredient detective!

The most accurate way to identify food intolerance is by an elimination and challenge diet. This should only be carried out after a thorough consultation with a qualified nutritionist or dietician and with their supervision.

Allergy UK's advice is always that keeping a food diary and identifying – with the help of a healthcare professional – the potential triggers that cause the intolerance and then excluding them from the diet is the ideal approach.

¹<http://www.foodintoleranceawareness.org/>

What is hypoparathyroidism?

Hypoparathyroidism occurs when either:

- the parathyroid glands do not release enough parathyroid hormone, or
- the parathyroid hormone that is released does not work properly.

The resulting low levels of 'active' parathyroid hormone causes calcium levels in the blood to fall and phosphate levels to rise. Calcium is used by nerve cells to propagate an impulse, and by muscle cells to contract. Humans want extremely regulated calcium levels because our brains (and entire nervous system) rely on calcium.

The body has four parathyroid glands. They are small, pea-sized glands, located in the neck just behind the butterfly-shaped thyroid gland.

Hypoparathyroidism is rare. It occurs equally in males and females. The age that someone may develop hypoparathyroidism depends on its cause.

What are the symptoms of hypoparathyroidism?

Individuals can experience different symptoms of hypoparathyroidism in different ways. The symptoms are largely due to the effects of low levels of calcium in the blood. Mild symptoms usually develop slowly and may be fleeting or they may require a small adjustment in medication (see below). Severe symptoms may come on rapidly needing urgent treatment with calcium given intravenously (directly into the veins via a drip).

Possible symptoms that may occur include:

- Muscle pains.
- Abdominal (stomach) pains.
- Twitching of the muscles of the face.
- Seizures.
- Confusion.
- Memory problems.
- Tiredness.
- Headaches.
- Brittle nails.
- Tingling, vibrating, burning or numbness of the fingers, toes or face.
- Carpedal spasm (contraction, or tightening, of the muscles of the hands and feet).
- Fainting.
- Eyesight problems.
- Dry skin and hair.
- Painful menstruation (periods).

How is hypoparathyroidism diagnosed?

Physical examination

There are a number of things that your doctor may look for when they examine you if they suspect that you have hypoparathyroidism:

- They may tap in front of your ear with your mouth slightly open. If your calcium levels are low because of hypoparathyroidism, this can cause repeated contraction (tightening) of the muscles in your face. This is called Chvostek's sign.
- Your doctor may also inflate a blood pressure cuff around the lower part of your arm. If your calcium levels are low because of hypoparathyroidism, this can lead to carpedal spasm, as described above.
- They may examine your eyes to look for cataracts which can be a complication of hypoparathyroidism.
- They may examine your muscle reflexes. This is a painless examination done by tapping the tendons of the muscles, for example, at the knee or the elbow. It is done using a special instrument called a tendon hammer. If your calcium levels are low due to hypoparathyroidism, these reflexes can be much more forceful than normal.

What are the aims of treatment for hypoparathyroidism?

The aims of treatment are to ensure that there are adequate levels of calcium in the bloodstream. This should mean that you will not suffer from any of the symptoms associated with low calcium levels.

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HEALTH AWARENESS DATES FOR THE DIARY

January		March	
5	Hypoparathyroidism Awareness Day http://www.hpth.org.uk	1 . 31	Great Daffodil Appeal http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/
23 . 30	Cervical Cancer Awareness Week http://www.jostrust.org.uk/	1 . 31	Prostate Cancer Awareness Month http://www.prostate-cancer.org.uk/
24-30	Cancertalk Week http://www.macmillan.org.uk	1 . 31	National Bed Month http://www.sleepcouncil.org.uk/
24 . 30	BE Loud! Be Clear! http://www.beatingbowelcancer.org/	1	Self Injury Awareness Day http://www.firstsigns.org.uk/
24 . 28	Food Allergy & Intolerance Week http://www.allergyuk.org/	1 . 31	Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month http://www.ovarian.org.uk/
February		2 . 8	Endometriosis Awareness Week http://www.endometriosis-uk.org/
1 . 28	Raynaud's Awareness Month http://www.raynauds.org.uk/	9	No Smoking Day http://www.nosmokingday.org.uk/
1 . 28	National Heart Month http://www.bhf.org.uk/	10	World Kidney Day http://www.worldkidneyday.org/
4 . 10	Tinnitus Awareness Week http://www.tinnitus.org.uk/	12	World Glaucoma Day http://www.wgday.net/
4	World Cancer Day http://www.worldcancercampaign.org/	21 . 27	National Salt Awareness Week http://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/
5	Stress Down Day http://www.stressdownday.org/	24	World TB Day http://www.worldtbdays.org/
21-26	Eating Disorders Awareness Week http://www.b-eat.co.uk/Home		
25	National Wear Red Day http://www.bhf.org.uk/news-and-campaigning/our-campaigns/national-heart-month/red-for-heart-2010.aspx		



February 2011 is National Heart Month

Why not join in the **Wear Red Day** and help the British Heart Foundation fight heart disease. Challenge your employees to a wear **red** day or choose your own event . anything goes as long as it's **red!**

For a free fundraising kit, go to www.bhf.org.uk/red

New 20 minute online risk assessments for low risk offices

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has produced a new web tool to assist employers to consider potential hazards in their office and think how they can manage them to keep employees safe.

The free online tool works by prompting employers to answer a series of questions about their workplace and then generates a unique risk assessment with actions required.

The online risk assessment tool for offices can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/office.htm

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