Reye's Syndrome

Reye's Syndrome is a condition of sudden brain disease (*encephalopathy*) and fatty infiltration of the liver. It seems to follow viral infections. The cause is unknown. It was once more common than it is now. Since the mid-1980's, it has become rare. It infects less than twenty children per year. It infects mostly children less than eighteen years of age.

The risk of getting Reye's syndrome is highly increased when taking aspirin during any influenza-like illness. People eighteen years of age and younger should not take aspirin during any flu-like illness.

SYMPTOMS

The disease varies from person to person. About a week after a viral illness, there is:

- Severe *nausea* (feeling sick to your stomach).
- Vomiting.
- Confusion.

The nervous system symptoms may move rapidly. Symptoms may go from mild loss of memory (*amnesia*) and tiredness (*lethargy*), to disorientation, unresponsiveness and coma.

DIAGNOSIS

The caregiver will examine the signs and symptoms of the disease. How the liver is working may be considered. If necessary, a liver tissue sample (*biopsy*) will provide a positive diagnosis.

TREATMENT

Treatment is aimed at correcting the laboratory abnormalities. It is also aimed at giving supportive care, including *endotracheal intubation and artificial ventilation* when necessary. These are procedures that help the patient to breathe.

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