Acute Disseminated Encephalomyelitis

Acute disseminated encephalomyelitis (ADE) is a neurological disorder. It is characterized by swelling (*inflammation*) of the brain and spinal cord. This is caused by damage to the myelin sheath. The myelin sheath is the fatty covering on nerve fibers in the brain. It acts as an insulator.

CAUSES

ADE may occur:

- With a viral or germ (*bacterial*) infection.
- As a complication of inoculation or vaccination.
- With no preceding cause.

SYMPTOMS

This disorder starts suddenly. It occurs in children more often than in adults. Problems (*symptoms*) vary among individuals. They may include:

- Headache.
- Delirium.
- Lethargy.
- Coma.
- *Seizures* (convulsions).
- Stiff neck.
- Fever.
- Ataxia (uncoordinated or unsteady movements) or (lack of muscle control).
- Optic neuritis.
- Transverse myelitis.
- Vomiting.
- Weight loss.
- Paralysis of a single limb (*monoparesis*).
- Paralysis on one side of the body (*hemiplegia*).

TREATMENT

Generally, treatment for ADE includes corticosteroid medications. Other treatment is based on symptoms and supportive.

PROGNOSIS

The outcome for individuals with ADE varies. Some patients achieve complete or nearly complete recovery. Others may have remaining problems. Some severe cases of ADE may be fatal. Overall, the prognosis is good when the disorder is:

- Diagnosed early.
- Treated promptly.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

The NINDS supports research on disorders, such as ADE. It is aimed at:

- Increasing understanding of these disorders.
- Finding ways to prevent and cure them.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

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