Alternating Hemiplegia

Alternating hemiplegia is a rare neurological (*nervous system*) illness. It develops in childhood, usually before the first 4 years of age. It causes repeated (*recurrent*) but temporary episodes of paralysis. The paralysis happens on one side of the body. It can affect:

- Eye movements.
- Arms and legs.
- Facial muscles.

CAUSES

The cause of the disorder is unknown.

SYMPTOMS

One form of the disorder was identified very recently and has a favorable outlook. Normally, the hemiplegia completely stops with sleep. But it may reoccur upon waking. It appears to be related to migraines. These children have no other mental or neurological related problems.

In more serious cases, symptoms may include:

- Decreased mental abilities (*mental impairment*).
- Balance and walking (*gait*) difficulties.
- Too much sweating.
- Changes in body temperature.
- Convulsions (*seizures*).

Sleep helps in the recovery from the periods of paralysis.

TREATMENT

Children with the mild form of this illness have a very favorable prognosis. Those who experience the more severe form have a less favorable prognosis. Drug therapy may help with the more serious form of alternating hemiplegia. It may reduce how severe the attacks of paralysis are. It may also reduce how long they last.

However, the children's lessened mental ability does not respond to drug therapy. Balance and gait problems continue. Over time, walking without help becomes difficult or impossible.

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

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