Vasculitis including Temporal Arteritis

Vasculitis is an inflammation of the blood vessel system. This includes the veins, arteries, and capillaries. Vasculitis may affect blood vessels of any type, size, or location. So it can cause problems in any organ system. This includes the central and peripheral nervous systems. The disorder may occur alone. Or it may happen with other disorders, such as temporal arteritis. Temporal arteritis is also called cranial or giant cell arteritis. It is an inflammation of the temporal artery. This artery runs over the temple, beside the eye.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms depend on which blood vessels are involved and what organs in the body are affected.
They may include:

- Stiffness.
- Muscle pain.
- Fever.
- Severe headaches.
- Pain when chewing.
- Tenderness in the temple area.

Other symptoms may include:

- Anemia.
- Fatigue.
- Weight loss.
- Shaking.
- Vision loss.
- Sweats.

TREATMENT

Treatment depends on the severity of the disorder and the patient's general health. It may include cortisone or cytotoxic drugs. Other treatments may include:

- Removal and reinfusion of blood plasma (*plasmapheresis*).
- Intravenous gammaglobulin.
- Cyclosporin.

Some cases may not require treatment.
Treatment for temporal arteritis and its symptoms generally includes corticosteroid therapy. Early detection of temporal arteritis and immediate treatment are needed to prevent vision loss.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

The prognosis varies. It depends on the severity of the disorder. Mild cases are generally not life-threatening. But severe cases involve major organ systems. Severe cases may be permanently disabling or fatal. The prognosis for patients with temporal arteritis is generally good. With treatment, most individuals have complete remission. But vision loss may be irreversible.

Provided by: The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

Document Released: 12/08/2003 Document Re-Released: 03/16/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.