



GP (FOLLOW UP) CONSULTATION

“ For the last 6 weeks, I have **struggled in managing my eczema**. I don't know what has triggered it, but I experienced this the same time last year. I have been **applying cream (emollients) to my skin three times a day**, but this hasn't helped much.

I scratch all day and night. I can't focus at university or sleep properly and have missed lectures because I don't want people to see my face. I think I have hay fever too, which I guess isn't too weird for April.

More recently, I have also felt a **burning sensation in my mouth and throat when I eat some fruits like apples.**”

1. MEDICAL HISTORY



- Maternal family history of eczema and asthma
- Diagnosed with mild eczema at the age of 10
- Managed with emollients and topical corticosteroids when flare-ups occur
- Last flare-up was last year but he managed his symptoms with emollients. Before this flare-up, his last flare-up was 7 years ago but treatment with emollients and prednicarbate cream controlled symptoms within a week
- In the last six weeks, there have been flare-ups that only improve when he visits his parents
- Triggers of the previous flare-ups were not identified
- No changes in diet or use of detergents and soaps
- Started at university 2 years ago
- Family has a cat and a dog (~5 years)

2. PHYSICAL EXAMINATION



- Skin patches on the neck and face appear red, dry and cracked
- Breathing appears normal
- Nasal passages are congested
- Infraorbital folds under the eyes
- Rhinorrhoea
- Post-nasal drip
- Cough

3. GP INVESTIGATION



“ Leo appears to have **allergic rhinitis**¹ and the allergen source(s) that are causing it may also be causing a flare-up of his eczema.

His symptoms appear to **coincide with the birch tree pollen season**² but he may have also developed an **allergy to his pets**. I will **test the patient for sensitisation to birch tree pollen, pet dander and dust mites** (common indoor aeroallergens). Interestingly, he also reports **symptoms in the oral cavity after ingesting fresh foods**.

This may be a symptom associated with **pollen–food allergy syndrome**.^{3,4}

Overall, it is clear from the medical history that his eczema flare-ups and rhinitis symptoms are having a **significant impact on his psychological wellbeing and daily activities.**”

4. TEST RESULTS



- Specific IgE: birch tree pollen (8.2 kU_A/l), dust mites (*D. pteronyssinus*: 0.2 kU_A/l), cat dander (4.7 kU_A/l), dog dander (3.9 kU_A/l).

5. GP ACTION



“ Leo shows **sensitisation to cat and dog dander**, as well as **birch tree pollen**. Polysensitisation is **common in patients with atopic dermatitis**⁵ and has therefore made it difficult to identify the potential allergenic source. I will **refer him to an allergist (see next page)** so a complete assessment can be carried out.¹ In the meantime, I will provide Leo with **patient information leaflets on his condition**.^{1,6,7}

Intranasal antihistamines¹ and stronger topical steroids⁶ were prescribed to manage Leo's rhinitis and eczema symptoms, respectively.



ALLERGIST CONSULTATION

After reviewing Leo's medical history and IgE test results, a physical examination was carried out. His eczema is inflamed and remains uncontrolled despite treatment with stronger topical steroids. His allergic rhinitis has barely improved. Upon extensive discussion with Leo, it was discovered that his student accommodation (where he has lived for the last 2 years) is surrounded by birch trees.

“ Leo's symptoms are **unlikely to be triggered by pet dander** as exposure to his pets in the family home does not aggravate his symptoms. However, it is **very likely** that his symptoms are **triggered by birch tree pollen** due to their seasonal manifestation. To understand whether Leo also has pollen-food syndrome, I will carry out **a specific IgE test for the allergen Bet v 1** and address potential **clinical cross-reactivities** to homologues present in other tree pollens and fresh foods.”

1. TEST RESULTS

Component-resolved diagnostics:

- Birch: Bet v 1 (27.8 kU_A/l).



2. ALLERGIST ACTION

“ Leo is **highly sensitised to Bet v 1** and experiences **oral allergy symptoms** when consuming raw apples, carrots and hazelnuts.

This suggests that he is experiencing oral symptoms due to **cross-reactions caused by Bet v 1 homologues** present in these foods. His eczema flare-ups and allergic rhinitis symptoms also **coincide with the birch tree pollen season**, suggesting that he is **allergic to birch tree pollen**.

I will prescribe Leo **intranasal corticosteroids** for his rhinitis¹ and have begun applying dry bandages to his neck and chest where he has eczema.⁶

To stop the disruptive sleep caused by the itching, I have prescribed a **sedating antihistamine for two weeks**.⁶ If this does not improve, I will consider prescribing Leo **allergen immunotherapy with birch extract**.^{1,7}”

At an 8-week follow-up consultation, Leo no longer had allergic rhinitis and his eczema flare-up had improved. However, symptoms of his pollen-food syndrome remained. He was told to avoid raw plant foods with Bet v 1 homologues, if they induced bothersome symptoms.⁴

3. REFERENCES

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