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Wells syndrome

Wells syndrome is a rare condition of unknown cause. It is also called 'eosinophilic cellulitis'.

What does Wells syndrome look like?

Typically the rash is preceded by itching or burning skin and consists of markedly swollen nodules and plaques (lumps) with prominent borders. The patches are usually bright red at first, frequently looking like [cellulitis](#), then fade over four to eight weeks, leaving green, grey or brown patches. They can blister. The rash most commonly occurs on the limbs, but may also affect the trunk.

The patient often feels very tired and has a fever in approximately 25% of cases.

Wells syndrome



Investigations

A blood count may reveal increased numbers of white blood cells called eosinophils - these are often associated with allergy or insect bites.

The diagnosis of Wells syndrome can be established by a [skin biopsy](#) finding of many eosinophils and characteristic 'flame figures'. However, flame figures are not diagnostic of Wells syndrome and can be seen in other conditions that have increased numbers of eosinophils.

An important part of the management of patients with Wells syndrome is to exclude underlying causes such as parasitic disorders (e.g. a worm infestation) or an [allergic contact dermatitis](#) with the help of the appropriate tests.

Treatment

[Oral corticosteroid treatment](#) with prednisone can lead to a dramatic improvement within days and the course is typically tapered over one month. Other treatments include [minocycline](#), [dapson](#), [griseofulvin](#), [ciclosporin](#) and oral [antihistamines](#).

Mild cases may respond to [topical steroid therapy](#) alone.

Related information

References:

On DermNet NZ:

- [Hypereosinophilic syndrome](#)
- [Eosinophilic fasciitis](#)
- [Eosinophilic folliculitis](#)

Other websites:

- [Wells Syndrome \(Eosinophilic Cellulitis\)](#) – emedicine, the online textbook of dermatology

Books about skin diseases:

See the [DermNet NZ bookstore](#)

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DermNet does not provide an on-line consultation service.

If you have any concerns with your skin or its treatment, see a [dermatologist](#) for advice.

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