The background of the cover features a detailed anatomical illustration of a human torso, showing the internal organs, muscles, and skeletal structure. The illustration is rendered in a semi-transparent, glowing style with a color palette of reds, oranges, and yellows. The head is shown in profile, facing right, with the brain and facial structures visible. The torso is shown from the neck down to the waist, with the heart, lungs, and major blood vessels clearly depicted. The overall aesthetic is scientific and professional.

ESSENTIALS OF  
KUMAR & CLARK'S  
CLINICAL  
MEDICINE

FIFTH EDITION

ANNE  
BALLINGER

SERIES EDITORS

PARVEEN KUMAR  
MICHAEL CLARK

SAUNDERS  
ELSEVIER

# Medical emergencies

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ESSENTIALS OF KUMAR & CLARK'S CLINICAL MEDICINE

## ESSENTIALS

SERIES EDITORS

### PROFESSOR PARVEEN KUMAR

Professor of Clinical Medicine and Education  
Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry  
Queen Mary University of London, and  
Honorary Consultant Physician and Gastroenterologist  
Barts and the London NHS Trust and Homerton University Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK  
and

### DR MICHAEL CLARK

Honorary Senior Lecturer, Barts and  
The London School of Medicine and Dentistry  
Queen Mary University of London  
London, UK

Commissioning Editor: Pauline Graham

Development Editor: Helen Leng

Project Manager: Gopika Sasidharan

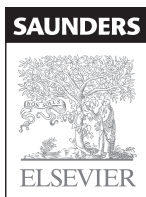
Designer/Design Direction: Stewart Larking

Illustration Manager: Gillian Richards



ESSENTIALS OF  
KUMAR & CLARK'S  
CLINICAL  
MEDICINE  
FIFTH EDITION

ANNE BALLINGER MD FRCP  
Consultant Gastroenterologist and General Physician  
Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Hospital  
East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust  
Kent, UK



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First edition 1995  
Second edition 2000  
Third edition 2003  
Fourth edition 2007  
Fifth edition 2011

ISBN 9780702035234

International ISBN 9780702035241

#### British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

#### Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

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Knowledge and best practice in this field are constantly changing. As new research and experience broaden our understanding, changes in research methods, professional practices, or medical treatment may become necessary.

Practitioners and researchers must always rely on their own experience and knowledge in evaluating and using any information, methods, compounds, or experiments described herein. In using such information or methods they should be mindful of their own safety and the safety of others, including parties for whom they have a professional responsibility.

With respect to any drug or pharmaceutical products identified, readers are advised to check the most current information provided (i) on procedures featured or (ii) by the manufacturer of each product to be administered, to verify the recommended dose or formula, the method and duration of administration, and contraindications. It is the responsibility of practitioners, relying on their own experience and knowledge of their patients, to make diagnoses, to determine dosages and the best treatment for each individual patient, and to take all appropriate safety precautions.

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# Series Preface

Medical students and doctors in training are expected to travel to different hospitals and community health centres as part of their education. Many books are too large to carry around, but the information they contain is often vital for the basic understanding of disease processes.

The *Essentials* series is designed to provide portable, pocket-sized companions for students and junior doctors. They are most useful for clinical practice, whether in hospital or the community, and for exam revision.

The notable success of *Essentials of Clinical Medicine* over many editions is shown by its presence in the pockets of all healthcare professionals – nurses, pharmacists, physical and occupational therapists, to name a few – not simply medical students and doctors.

All the books in the series have the same helpful features:

- Succinct text
- Simple line drawings
- Emergency and other boxes
- Tables that summarize causes and clinical features of disease
- Exam questions and explanatory answers – now online
- Dictionary of terms

They contain core material for quick revision, easy reference and practical management. The modern format makes them easy to read, providing an indispensable ‘pocket essential’.

*Parveen Kumar and Michael Clark*  
Series Editors

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# Preface

This is the fifth edition of 'Pocket' Essentials of Clinical Medicine and we continue to strive to produce a small medical textbook with anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology as a key part to understanding clinical features and treatment for each disease process. The book is based on its parent textbook, *Kumar and Clark's Clinical Medicine*, from which we have taken these core principles. The 'Pocket' has been dropped from the title in recognition that white coats, and with it the pocket, have been largely discarded in clinical areas. However, the book has remained small so that it is easy to carry around and use as a portable reference source. The revised title, *Essentials of Kumar and Clark's Clinical Medicine* reflects the close association with its parent text.

The fifth edition has been extensively revised and updated, in line with changes in clinical medicine and with its parent text. Since the publication of the fourth edition there have been huge changes in many areas of medicine. Stroke medicine is now a specialty of its own with thrombolysis a routine treatment for ischaemic stroke, and emergency triage and assessment of transient ischaemic attack. The biological agents are used earlier and with expanded indications in both rheumatology and gastroenterology. Advances in imaging have seen PET scanning in routine staging of malignancy, CT and MRI used in the assessment of cardiovascular disease and CT colonography competing with and complementing conventional colonoscopy. These name a small percentage of the advances in clinical medicine that have been incorporated into this edition.

Malignant disease is a new chapter in the fifth edition, in which we have described specific and symptomatic treatment of cancer, discussed oncological emergencies and also dealt with care of the dying patient. 'Practical procedures' was introduced in the third edition but we have now removed this chapter. In this era of internet videos, animated procedures and simulation teaching this topic is far better dealt with outside of a textbook. We have also removed 'Therapeutics' as an individual chapter and instead have put a section at the end of each chapter specifically dedicated to a description of common drugs relevant to that system. It is beyond the scope of this book to provide an exhaustive drug list that covers prescribing in all patient groups. We have also removed the examination questions that have appeared in previous editions. These will appear in a different format as a stand-alone text. The changes to the chapters have allowed us to expand the text dedicated to the description and management of diseases in clinical medicine.

In previous editions we have extensively cross-referenced to the current edition of the parent textbook *Clinical Medicine*. This formatting has been removed from the fifth edition of *Essentials of Clinical Medicine* because we no longer assume that a single edition of *Clinical Medicine* is in widespread

use and because the page headings in *Clinical Medicine* mean that topic navigation is rapid and straightforward.

The fifth edition of *Essentials of Clinical Medicine* has seen many changes from previous editions. However one constant feature throughout is the support and assistance of Mike Clark and Parveen Kumar, the editors of *Clinical Medicine* and this series of small textbooks.

*Anne Ballinger*



# Abbreviations

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>ACE</b>    | angiotensin-converting enzyme                  |
| <b>ACTH</b>   | adrenocorticotrophic hormone                   |
| <b>ADH</b>    | antidiuretic hormone                           |
| <b>AF</b>     | atrial fibrillation                            |
| <b>AIDS</b>   | acquired immunodeficiency syndrome             |
| <b>ALS</b>    | advanced life support                          |
| <b>ANA</b>    | antinuclear antibodies                         |
| <b>ANCA</b>   | antineutrophil cytoplasmic antibodies          |
| <b>ANF</b>    | antinuclear factor                             |
| <b>APACHE</b> | acute physiology and chronic health evaluation |
| <b>ARDS</b>   | adult respiratory distress syndrome            |
| <b>AST</b>    | aspartate aminotransferase                     |
| <b>AV</b>     | atrioventricular                               |
| <b>AXR</b>    | abdominal X-ray                                |
| <b>BCG</b>    | bacille Calmette–Guérin                        |
| <b>BMD</b>    | bone mineral density                           |
| <b>BMI</b>    | body mass index                                |
| <b>BP</b>     | blood pressure                                 |
| <b>COPD</b>   | chronic obstructive pulmonary disease          |
| <b>CAPD</b>   | continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis      |
| <b>CCF</b>    | congestive cardiac failure                     |
| <b>CCU</b>    | coronary care unit                             |
| <b>CLL</b>    | chronic lymphatic leukaemia                    |
| <b>CML</b>    | chronic myeloid leukaemia                      |
| <b>CNS</b>    | central nervous system                         |
| <b>CPR</b>    | cardiopulmonary resuscitation                  |
| <b>CRP</b>    | C-reactive protein                             |
| <b>CSF</b>    | cerebrospinal fluid                            |
| <b>CT</b>     | computed tomography                            |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>CVP</b>                    | central venous pressure   |
| <b>CXR</b>                    | chest X-ray   |
| <b>DIC</b>                    | disseminated intravascular coagulation  |
| <b>DMARDs</b>                 | disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs   |
| <b>DNA</b>                    | deoxyribonucleic acid   |
| <b>DVT</b>                    | deep venous thrombosis  |
| <b>DXT</b>                    | dual energy X-ray absorptiometry  |
| <b>ECG</b>                    | electrocardiogram   |
| <b>EEG</b>                    | electroencephalogram  |
| <b>ELISA</b>                  | enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay   |
| <b>ERCP</b>                   | endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography  |
| <b>ESR</b>                    | erythrocyte sedimentation rate  |
| <b>EUS</b>                    | endoscopic ultrasound   |
| <b>FBC</b>                    | full blood count  |
| <b>GABA</b>                   | $\gamma$ -aminobutyric acid   |
| <b><math>\gamma</math>-GT</b> | $\gamma$ -glutamyltranspeptidase  |
| <b>GFR</b>                    | glomerular filtration rate  |
| <b>GORD</b>                   | gastro-oesophageal reflux disease   |
| <b>Hb</b>                     | haemoglobin   |
| <b>HDU</b>                    | high-dependency unit  |
| <b>5-HIAA</b>                 | 5-hydroxyindoleacetic acid  |
| <b>HIV</b>                    | human immunodeficiency virus  |
| <b>HLA</b>                    | human leucocyte antigen   |
| <b>ICD</b>                    | International Classification of Diseases – the classification used to code and classify mortality data from death certificates                                  |
| <b>ICD-9-CM</b>               | ICD, Clinical Modification – used to code and classify morbidity data from the inpatient and outpatient records, general practices and Health Statistic surveys |
| <b>ICU</b>                    | intensive care unit   |
| <b>Ig</b>                     | immunoglobulin (e.g. IgM = immunoglobulin the M class)  |
| <b>i.m.</b>                   | intramuscular   |
| <b>INR</b>                    | international normalized ratio  |

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>iu/IU</b>                       | international unit                                    |
| <b>i.v.</b>                        | intravenous   |
| <b>IVP</b>                         | intravenous pyelogram                                 |
| <b>JVP</b>                         | jugular venous pressure                               |
| <b>LP</b>                          | lumbar puncture                                       |
| <b>LVF</b>                         | left ventricular failure                              |
| <b>MCV</b>                         | mean corpuscular volume                               |
| <b>ME</b>                          | myalgic encephalomyelitis                             |
| <b>MRI</b>                         | magnetic resonance imaging                            |
| <b>MRSA</b>                        | meticillin-resistant <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>     |
| <b>MSU</b>                         | mid-stream urine                                      |
| <b>Na<sup>+</sup></b>              | concentration of sodium ions                          |
| <b>nd</b>                          | notifiable disease                                    |
| <b>NICE</b>                        | National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence |
| <b>NSAIDs</b>                      | non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs                 |
| <b>OGD</b>                         | oesophagogastroduodenoscopy                           |
| <b>P<sub>a</sub>CO<sub>2</sub></b> | partial pressure of carbon dioxide in arterial blood  |
| <b>P<sub>a</sub>O<sub>2</sub></b>  | partial pressure of oxygen in arterial blood          |
| <b>PCR</b>                         | polymerase chain reaction                             |
| <b>PCV</b>                         | packed cell volume                                    |
| <b>PEG</b>                         | percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy                   |
| <b>PET</b>                         | positron emission tomography                          |
| <b>PPI</b>                         | proton pump inhibitor                                 |
| <b>PR</b>                          | per rectum (rectal instillation)                      |
| <b>PT</b>                          | prothrombin time                                      |
| <b>PTC</b>                         | percutaneous transhepatic cholangiography             |
| <b>PTCA</b>                        | percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty        |
| <b>PTTK</b>                        | partial thromboplastin time with kaolin               |
| <b>RAST</b>                        | radioallergosorbent test                              |
| <b>RCC</b>                         | red cell count  |
| <b>RhF</b>                         | rheumatoid factor                                     |

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>RIA</b>  | radioimmunoassay   |
| <b>RNA</b>  | ribonucleic acid   |
| <b>s.c.</b> | subcutaneous   |
| <b>SLE</b>  | systemic lupus erythematosus                             |
| <b>STI</b>  | sexually transmitted infection                           |
| <b>SVC</b>  | superior vena cava                                       |
| <b>SVT</b>  | supraventricular tachycardia                             |
| <b>TIA</b>  | transient ischaemic attack                               |
| <b>TNM</b>  | tumour, node, metastasis classification                  |
| <b>TPN</b>  | total parenteral nutrition                               |
| <b>TRH</b>  | thyrotrophin-releasing hormone                           |
| <b>TSH</b>  | thyroid-stimulating hormone                              |
| <b>UTI</b>  | urinary tract infection                                  |
| <b>VDRL</b> | Venereal Disease Research Laboratory (test for syphilis) |
| <b>VF</b>   | ventricular fibrillation                                 |
| <b>VIP</b>  | vasoactive intestinal polypeptide                        |
| <b>VT</b>   | ventricular tachycardia                                  |
| <b>WBC</b>  | white blood (cell) count                                 |
| <b>WCC</b>  | white cell count   |
| <b>WE</b>   | Wernicke's encephalopathy                                |

# Significant websites

## GENERAL WEBSITES

### Medical dictionaries

<http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/>

<http://www.online-medical-dictionary.org/>

### Guidelines and evidence based medicine

<http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/guidelinesfinder/>

The National Library of Guidelines is a collection of guidelines for the NHS. It is based on guidelines produced by NICE and other national agencies

<http://www.nice.org.uk>

UK National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

<http://www.nih.gov/health>

US National Institutes of Health

<http://www.sign.ac.uk>

Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network

<http://www.library.nhs.uk>

NHS Evidence – evidence-based clinical and non-clinical information to help make decisions about treatment and use of resources

<http://www.guideline.gov/>

National Guideline Clearing House

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/dvla/medical/ataglance.aspx>

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency – guide to the current medical standards of fitness to drive and exclusions

<http://www.cochrane.org/cochrane-reviews>

Cochrane Reviews are part of the *Cochrane Library* and provide systematic reviews of primary research in human healthcare and health policy. They investigate the effects of interventions for prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. They also assess the accuracy of a diagnostic test for a given condition in a specific patient group and setting

<http://www.medicine.ox.ac.uk/bandolier/index.html>

Monthly journal on evidence-based healthcare

<http://www.emedicine.com>

eMedicine features up-to-date, searchable, peer-reviewed medical journals, on-line physician reference textbooks, and a full-text article database. Also patient information leaflets

<http://www.bma.org>

British Medical Association. A library, excellent ethics section and healthcare information. More sections for members

## Medical calculators

<http://www.mdcalc.com/>

<http://medicineworld.org/online-medical-calculators.html>

Clinical calculators and formulas for many conditions, e.g. sodium correction rate in hyponatraemia, APACHE II score and anion gap

## Healthcare journals and magazines

<http://www.bmj.com/index.shtml>

*BMJ (British Medical Journal)*

<http://www.doh.gov.uk/cmo/publications.htm>

Chief Medical Officer's publications

## Medical societies and organizations

<http://www.gmc-uk.org/>

UK General Medical Council

## Others

<http://www.medilexicon.com/icd9codes.php>

Search for the definitions of ICD9/ICD-9-CM codes

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed>

PubMed: Medline on the Web

<http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk>

<http://www.patient.co.uk>

Information for patients on diseases, operations and investigations

<http://www.medicalert.org.uk>

Charity providing a life-saving identification system for individuals with hidden medical conditions and allergies

## CHAPTER-SPECIFIC WEBSITES

### 1 Ethics and communication

<http://www.bma.org.uk/ethics>

British Medical Association ethics site

<http://www.clinical-skills-net.org.uk>

UK Clinical Skills Network

<http://www.ethics-network.org.uk>

UK Clinical Ethics Network

<http://www.gmc-uk.org/>

General Medical Council

<http://www.nih.gov/sigs/bioethics/uk>

National Institutes of Health website – bioethics pages

<http://www.nivel.nl/each>

European Association for Communication in Healthcare

<http://www.wma.net/e/policy.html>

World Medical Association policy

## 2 Infectious diseases

<http://www.cdc.gov>

US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC has a major role in public health efforts to prevent and control infectious and chronic diseases, injuries, workplace hazards, disabilities, and environmental health threats

<http://www.doh.gov.uk/eaga/>

Department of Health Expert Advisory Group on AIDS: information about post-exposure prophylaxis, guidelines for pre-test discussion on HIV testing and risks of transmission

<http://www.hivatis.org/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: HIV/AIDS treatment/information service

<http://www.idlinks.com>

The communication centre for infectious diseases

<http://www.nfid.org>

National Foundation for Infectious Disease, USA

<http://www.hpa.org.uk>

Health Protection Agency website. Provides up-to-date information for medical practitioners on some infectious diseases and their prevention, particularly those that are new or where an epidemic is expected

<http://www.phls.co.uk/>

UK Public Health Laboratory Service: UK regional information on infections

<http://www.who.int/en>

The World Health Organization is the United Nations specialized agency for health. The website provides information and fact sheets on many infectious diseases, and much more

## 3 Gastroenterology and nutrition

<http://nat.illinois.edu/about.html>

Nutrient analysis tool. Free analysis of the nutrient content of food

<http://www.bsg.org.uk>

British Society of Gastroenterology. Regularly updated clinical practice guidelines for many common conditions

<http://www.gastro.org/practice/medical-position-statements>

American Gastroenterology Association medical position statements provide preferred approaches to specific medical problems or issues

## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.coeliac.co.uk> – Coeliac UK

<http://www.corecharity.org.uk> – Core

<http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/a-z.asp> – National Digestive Diseases information clearing house

<http://www.gastro.org/patient-center> – American Gastroenterology Association Patient Centre

<http://www.nacc.org.uk> – National Association for Crohn's and Colitis

## 4 Liver, biliary tract and pancreatic disease

<http://www.aasld.org/practiceguidelines/Pages/default.aspx>

American Association for the Study of Liver Disease practice guidelines

<http://www.easl.eu>

European Association for the Study of the Liver

<http://www.basl.org.uk/>

British Association for the Study of the Liver

## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk> – British Liver Trust

<http://www.liverfoundation.org> – American Liver Foundation

<http://pancreasfoundation.org> – The National Pancreas Foundation

## 5 Haematological disease

<http://www.bcshguidelines.com>

The British Committee for Standards in Haematology. Guidelines for medical practitioners on diagnosis and treatment of haematological diseases

<http://www.hematology.org>

American Society of Haematology. Clinical guidelines, self-assessment program, teaching cases and video library



## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.blood.co.uk> – UK National Blood Service

<http://www.haemophilia.org.uk> – The Haemophilia Society for patients affected by bleeding disorders

<http://www.leukaemia.org.au> – Leukaemia Foundation

[www.sicklecellsociety.org](http://www.sicklecellsociety.org) – Sickle Cell Society

## 6 Malignant disease

<http://www.cancer.gov>

US National Cancer Institute provides cancer statistics, patient information and clinical trials

<http://eolc.cbcl.co.uk/eolc/lcp.htm>

NHS National End of Life Care Programme

## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.macmillan.org.uk> – Macmillan Cancer Support

<http://info.cancerresearchuk.org> – Cancer Research UK

## 7 Rheumatology

<http://www.rheumatology.org.uk>

The British Society for Rheumatology. Clinical guidelines for medical practitioners

<http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org>

Arthritis Research UK. Publications on musculoskeletal conditions

<http://www.nos.org.uk>

National Osteoporosis Society. Guidance on investigation and management of osteoporosis

<http://www.rheumatology.org/publications/guidelines>

American College of Rheumatology clinical practice guidelines

## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.rheumatology.org.uk> – British Society for Rheumatology

<http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org> – Arthritis Research UK

<http://www.nos.org.uk> – National Osteoporosis Society

<http://www.nras.org.uk> – National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society

## 8/9 Water, electrolytes and acid–base balance/ Renal disease

<http://www.arupconsult.com/Topics/ElectrolyteAbnormalities.html>

ARUP Consult; the physician's guide to life-threatening electrolyte abnormalities

<http://www.britishrenal.org>

British Renal Society, guidance on clinical management

<http://www.kidney.org/professionals/kdoqi/guidelines.cfm>

National Kidney Foundation clinical practice guidelines

<http://www.renal.org>

The Renal Association guidelines

<http://www.nephronline.org>

Nephronline management and guidance section for health professionals

### Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.kidney.org> – UK National Kidney Federation

<http://www.nephronline.org> – Nephronline

## 10 Cardiovascular disease

<http://www.erc.edu>

European Resuscitation Council (ERC). Latest guidelines on resuscitation, as well as a full overview of the ERC educational tools such as manuals, posters and slides

<http://www.resus.org.uk>

Resuscitation Council (UK). Resuscitation guidelines

<http://www.escardio.org>

European Society of Cardiology clinical practice guidelines

<http://www.cardiosource.org>

American College of Cardiology

<http://www.ecglibrary.com>

ECG tracings library to help improve ECG skills

### Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.bhf.org.uk> – British Heart Foundation

<http://www.americanheart.org> – American Heart Association

## 11 Respiratory disease

<http://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk>

British Thoracic Society. Clinical practice guidelines and clinical information

<http://www.goldcopd.org>

The WHO Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD).  
Clinical guidelines on diagnosis, treatment and prevention of COPD

<http://www.thoracic.org>

American Thoracic Society, clinical practice guidelines

## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk> – British Thoracic Society

<http://www.asthma.org.uk> – Asthma UK

<http://www.goldcopd.org> – The WHO Global Initiative for COPD

<http://www.thoracic.org> – American Thoracic Society

<http://www.quitsmoking.com> – The Quit Smoking Company

<http://www.quitsmokinguk.com> – NHS Quit Smoking Service

## 12 Intensive care medicine

<http://www.esicm.org>

European Society for Intensive Care guidelines and recommendations for  
medical practitioners

<http://www.ics.ac.uk>

UK Intensive Care Society standards and guidelines for medical  
practitioners

<http://www.survivingsepsis.org>

Surviving Sepsis Campaign clinical guidelines

## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.ics.ac.uk> – UK Intensive Care Society

<http://www.survivingsepsis.org> – Surviving Sepsis Campaign

## 13 Drug therapy, poisoning and alcohol misuse

<http://www.mhra.gov.uk>

Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency includes <http://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk> to report suspected side-effects to any medication

<http://www.toxbase.org>

Toxbase. Database of UK National Poisons Information Service

<http://www.toxnet.nlm.nih.gov>

US National Library of Medicine Toxicology and Environmental Health  
Information Program. Toxicology, environmental health, chemical databases  
and other information resources

<http://www.who.int/ipcs/poisons/centre/directory/en>

International Programme on Chemical Safety contact details of all poisons – centres world-wide.

<http://www.doh.gov.uk/cmo/cmo0202.htm>

Department of Health. Detailed information on carbon monoxide poisoning

## Information for patients and relatives

[www.patient.co.uk/dils.asp](http://www.patient.co.uk/dils.asp) – Patient UK. Information leaflets on specific medicines and drugs

<http://www.alcoholscreening.org> helps people assess their drinking patterns. <http://www.drinksafely.info> – useful information about harmful effects of alcohol and guidelines for safe drinking

## 14 Endocrine disease

<http://endocrine.niddk.nih.gov>

US National Endocrine and Metabolic Diseases Information Service

<http://www.endocrinology.org>

Society for Endocrinology. Clinical updates, clinical cases and publications related to endocrinology

## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.endocrineweb.com> – website for diabetes, osteoporosis, thyroid, parathyroid and other endocrine disorders

<http://www.pituitary.org.uk> – The Pituitary Foundation (UK). Information and support for those living with pituitary disorders

## 15 Diabetes mellitus and other disorders of metabolism

<http://www.idf.org>

International Diabetes Federation

## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.diabetes.org.uk> – Diabetes UK

<http://www.diabetes.org> – American Diabetes Association.

<http://www.jdf.org.uk> – Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (UK)

## 16 The special senses

<http://www.nei.nih.gov>

National Eye Institute with a professional section of statistics and pathology collection

<http://www.eyeatlas.com/contents.htm>

Online atlas of ophthalmology

<http://www.entuk.org>

British Association of Otorhinolaryngologists, guidelines and position papers

## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.defeatingdeafness.org> – Deafness Research UK

<http://www.nei.nih.gov> – National Eye Institute

<http://www.entuk.org> – British Association of Otorhinolaryngologists

## 17 Neurology

<http://www.theabn.org>

Documents relating to evidence-based neurology

## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.epilepsy.org.uk> – Epilepsy Action

<http://www.gbs.org.uk> – Guillain–Barré Syndrome Support Group

<http://www.mssociety.org.uk> – UK Multiple Sclerosis Society

<http://www.parkinsons.org.uk> – Parkinson’s Disease Society

<http://www.stroke.org.uk> – The Stroke Association (UK)

## 18 Dermatology

[www.dermatlas.com](http://www.dermatlas.com)

A collection of 11 750 images in dermatology and skin disease

<http://www.bad.org.uk>

British Association of Dermatologists clinical guidelines and other professional information.

## Information for patients and relatives

<http://www.eczema.org> – UK National Eczema Society

<http://www.paalliance.org> – Psoriatic Arthropathy Alliance (psoriasis)

## Therapeutics

<http://bnf.org> – *British National Formulary*. Authoritative and practical information on the selection and clinical use of drugs

<http://www.dtb.org.uk/idtb> – *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin*. Independent reviews of medical treatment.

Registration is necessary for these websites.

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# Ethics and communication

Ethical and moral issues are integrally involved with patient care, particularly with respect to controversial topics such as euthanasia, organ donation and genetic technology. A doctor with clinical responsibility for a patient has three corresponding duties of care:

- *Protect life and health.* Clinicians should practise medicine to a high standard and not cause unnecessary suffering or harm. Treatment should only be given when it is thought to be beneficial to that patient. Competent patients have the right to refuse treatment, but decisions not to provide life-sustaining treatment should only be taken with their informed consent on the basis of a clear explanation about the consequences of their refusal.
- *Respect autonomy.* Clinicians must respect the need to maintain the autonomy and self-determination of patients, and thus recognize that the patient has the ability to reason, plan and make choices about the future. Wherever possible patients should remain responsible for themselves. Informed consent and confidentiality are fundamental parts of good medical practice and respect for human dignity. Medical information belongs to the patient and should not be disclosed to any other parties, including relatives, without the informed consent of the patient. However, the right to privacy does not entail the right to harm others in exercising it, and in certain circumstances clinicians must breach confidentiality, e.g. infectious patients who pose a threat to specific individuals through undisclosed risks. Breach of confidentiality in these circumstances is usually only done after informing the patient of the intent to do so.
- *Protect life and health, and respect autonomy with fairness and justice.* All patients have the right to be treated equally regardless of race, fitness, social worth, class, or any other arbitrary prejudice or favouritism.

Various regulatory bodies, common law and the Human Rights Act 1998 regulate medical practice and ensure that doctors take their duties of care seriously. The standards expected of healthcare professionals by their regulatory bodies (for example in the UK, the General Medical Council (GMC), the

Royal College of Physicians and British Medical Association) may at times be higher than the minimum required by law.

## LEGALLY VALID CONSENT

It is a general legal and ethical principle that valid consent must be obtained before starting treatment or physical investigation, or providing personal care, for a patient. This principle reflects the right of patients to determine what happens to their own bodies. For instance, common law has established that touching a patient without valid consent may constitute the civil or criminal offence of battery. Furthermore, failure to obtain adequate consent may be a factor in a claim of negligence against the health professional involved, particularly if the patient suffers harm as a result of treatment.

The amount of information doctors provide to each patient will vary according to factors such as the nature and severity of the condition, the complexity of the treatment, the risks associated with the treatment or procedure and the patient's own wishes.

In the consent process enough information must be provided in order that the patient's decisions are informed. This should be in the form of a discussion with the patient and written information leaflets. For a patient who does not speak the native language this must be done with the aid of a health advocate. The type of information provided includes:

- The purpose of the investigation or treatment
- Details and uncertainties of the diagnosis
- Options for treatment including the option not to treat
- Explanation of the likely benefits and probabilities of success for each option
- Known possible side-effects: decide what information about risks a 'reasonable person' in the position of the patient would want before agreeing to treatment
- The name of the doctor who will have overall responsibility
- A reminder that the patient can change his or her mind at any time
- An opportunity to raise with patients the possibility of additional problems coming to light during the procedure, and discussion of possible action in this event.

## Obtaining consent

For consent to be valid it must be given voluntarily after providing the patient with a reasonable amount of information about the risks of the proposed treatment or investigation. In addition, the patient must have the capacity to consent to the treatment in question, i.e. the patient must be able to comprehend and retain information about the treatment and use this information in the decision-making process. The clinician providing the treat-



ment or investigation is responsible for ensuring that the patient has given valid consent before treatment begins. Consent may be verbal (e.g. for venepuncture) or written (e.g. always for a surgical procedure) depending on the proposed treatment or intervention. However, it should be remembered that a signed consent form is not legal or professional proof that proper informed consent has been obtained. The person obtaining consent should be the surgeon/physician who is doing the procedure or an assistant who is fully competent to carry out the procedure and therefore understands the potential complications. It is not acceptable for a junior doctor who does not perform and fully understand the procedure to obtain consent.

## Special circumstances

**Emergencies** Treatment can only be given legally to adult patients without consent if they are temporarily or permanently incompetent to provide it and the treatment is necessary to save their life, or to prevent them from incurring serious and permanent injury.

**Adults who lack capacity to consent** In the case of adults who cannot give informed consent because of brain damage, the doctor must decide if the proposed treatment is in the best interests of the patient. The treatment should be discussed with the relatives but they should not be asked to provide consent. It must also be determined if the person has previously expressed any opinions regarding certain procedures, perhaps on the grounds of religious or moral beliefs. This wish must be respected. It is only when the patient may die if an intervention is not made that this can be carried out without consent. However, if the patient had already expressed a clear opinion on this matter, the doctor cannot override this, whatever the consequences.

**Children** In the UK, the legal age of presumed competence to consent to treatment is 16 years. Below this age, those with parental responsibility are the legal proxies for their children and usually consent to treatment on their behalf. At any age, an attempt should be made to explain fully the procedures and potential outcomes to the child, even if the child is too young to be fully competent. Children under 16 years can give legally effective consent to medical treatment provided they have sufficient understanding and intelligence.

**Research procedures** Doctors must ensure that patients asked to consider taking part in research are given written information presented in terms and in a form that they can understand. Patients must be aware that they are being asked to participate in a research project and that the results are not predictable. Adequate time must be given for reflection prior to the patient giving consent. Retention of human tissue for research or teaching requires written consent from the donor, or the next of kin of deceased patients or those who cannot speak for themselves.

**Teaching** It is necessary to obtain a patient's consent if a student or other observer would like to sit in during a consultation. The patient has the right to refuse without affecting the subsequent consultation. Consent must also be obtained if any additional procedure is to be carried out on an anaesthetized patient solely for the purposes of teaching. Consent must also be obtained if a video or audio recording is to be made of a procedure or consultation and subsequently used for teaching purposes.

**Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) testing** Doctors must obtain consent from patients before testing for HIV, except in rare circumstances, such as in unconscious patients, where testing would be in their immediate clinical interests, for example to help in making a diagnosis. In other circumstances, doctors must make sure that patients are given appropriate information about the implications of the test, including the advantages and disadvantages, and wherever possible allow patients appropriate time to consider and discuss them.

**Advance directives** Competent adults acting free from pressure and who understand the implications of their choice(s) can make an advance statement (sometimes known as a living will) about how they wish to be treated if they suffer loss of capacity. The advance statement may be a clear instruction refusing one or more medical procedures or a statement that specifies a degree of irreversible deterioration after which no life-sustaining treatment should be given. It is legally binding provided that the patient criteria outlined above are fulfilled, the statement is clearly applicable to the current circumstances and there is no reason to believe that the patient has changed his or her mind.

## COMMUNICATION

Communication is the way in which clinicians integrate clinical science with patient-centred, evidence-based shared healthcare. It is the process of exchanging information and ideas and also making a trusting relationship on which the collaborative partnership between patients and their families and healthcare workers depends. Good communication improves health outcomes and symptom resolution, increases patient adherence to therapies, increases patient and clinician satisfaction, reduces litigation and increases patient safety. Failure of communication leads to poor delivery of information and lack of patient understanding, and ultimately the patient feeling deserted and devalued. The majority of complaints against doctors are not based on failures of biomedical practice but on poor communication. Patients have identified qualities used by the doctor in the interview that lead to good relationships. Doctors who were considered to have communicated well:

- Orientated patients to the process of the visit, e.g. introductory comments: 'We are going to do this first and then go on to that'
- Used facilitative comments, e.g. 'uh huh, I see'

- Asked the patient their opinion
- Used active listening
- Checked understanding
- Used humour and laughter when appropriate
- Conducted slightly longer visits (18 versus 15 minutes).

## The medical interview

Clinicians must use their time to the greatest benefit of their patients. It is essential to find out not only the medical facts in detail but also what patients have experienced and what impact this experience has had on them. There are seven essential steps in the medical interview:

### 1. Building a relationship

The start of the interview will be helped by well-organized arrangements for appointments, reception and punctuality. The doctor should come out of the room to greet the patient, establish eye contact and shake hands if appropriate. Clinicians should introduce themselves by telling patients their name, status and responsibility to the patient; a name badge will reinforce this information. The patient should sit beside the clinician and not on the far side of a desk.

### 2. Opening the discussion

The aim is to address all the patient's concerns and usually they have more than one. Start by asking a question such as: 'What problems have brought you to see me today?'. Listen to the patient's answer attentively without interrupting. Then ask 'And is there something else?' to screen for problems before exploring the history in detail.

### 3. Gathering information

The components of a complete medical interview are: the nature of the key problems and clarification, date and time of onset, development over time, precipitating factors, help given to date, impact of the problem on patient's life and availability of support. This information is best obtained if the clinician encourages the patient to talk openly (nod occasionally, smile appropriately, avoid interrupting before the patient has finished talking and tell the story in their own words from start to finish). Starting with open questions ('Tell me about the pain you have been having' rather than 'You say chest pain, where is the pain?') and then moving on to screening, focused and more closed questions will help. Leading questions ('You have given up drinking alcohol, haven't you?') should be avoided. In addition the patient's ideas, concerns and expectations, and their attitude to similar problems in the past must be assessed.

## 4. Understanding the patient

Demonstrating empathy is a key skill in building the patient–clinician relationship and involves the patient’s experiences being seen, heard and accepted with some feedback to demonstrate this. For instance, ‘The last point made you look worried. Is there something more serious about that point you would like to tell me?’ demonstrates that the patient’s experiences have been seen.

## 5. Sharing information

Patients generally want to know whether their problem is serious and how will it affect them, what can be done about it and what is causing it. Verbal information provided to the patient can be supported by written information leaflets, diagrams, information provided by patient support groups and websites. A copy of the clinic letter that is sent to the patient’s general practitioner is helpful, provided that the information in the letter was included with this in mind. Verbal information is best provided in assimilable chunks in a logical sequence, using simple language and avoiding medical terminology. It is helpful to check with the patient that they have understood what has been said and ask them if you can move on to the next section of the information.

## 6. Reaching agreement on management

At this stage the clinician and patient need to agree on the best course as regards possible investigations and treatment. Some patients will want to be more involved than others in the decision-making process and this will become apparent during the interview. Any options for management should be discussed. Summarizing at the end will allow the patient to correct any misunderstandings.

## 7. Providing closing

Closing the interview may start with a brief summary of the patient’s agenda and then of that of the clinician. The patient should be told the arrangements for further interviews and the commitment to informing other healthcare professionals involved with the patient. It is useful to make a written record in the patient’s notes as to what the patient has been told and what has been understood. In some situations it is useful if the patient knows how to contact an appropriate team member as a safety net before the next interview. The interview is closed with an appropriate farewell and some words of encouragement.

### Breaking bad news

Breaking bad news can be difficult, and the way that it is broken has a major psychological and physical effect on patients. In these situations patients

usually know more than one thinks they do, they welcome clear information and do not want to be drawn into a charade of deception that does not allow them to discuss their illness and the future. The S-P-I-K-E-S strategy sets a framework for breaking bad news:

**S – Setting** The patient should be seen as soon as information is available in a quiet place with everyone seated. Ask not to be disturbed and hand bleeps and mobile phones (if necessary to leave switched on) to a colleague. If possible the patient should have someone with them and be introduced to everyone who is with you, e.g. specialist nurse. Indicate your status and the extent of your responsibility towards the patient.

**P – Perception** The clinician should begin the interview by finding out how much the patient knows and if anything new has developed since the last encounter.

**I – Invitation** Indicate to the patient that you have the results and ask if they would like you to explain the results to them. A few patients will want to know very little information and they will indicate that they would prefer for you to talk to a relative or friend.

**K – Knowledge** The clinician should give the patient a warning that the news is bad or more serious than initially thought ('I am afraid it looks more serious than we had hoped'), and then pause to allow the patient to think this over and only continue when the patient gives some lead to follow. The clinician should then give small chunks of information and ensure that the patient understands before moving on ('Is this making sense so far?'). Frequent pauses allow the patient to think. The interview should be stopped and resumed at a later date if necessary. The patient should be provided with some positive information and hope tempered with realism. The patient may ask for a time frame of events but it is often impossible to give an accurate time frame for a terminal disease. The importance of maintaining a good quality of life during this time must be stressed. The patient must be given the opportunity for any family members to meet the clinician.

**E – Empathy** The clinician will need to understand and respond appropriately to a range of emotions that the patient may express (denial, despair, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance). These must be acknowledged and where necessary, the clinician should wait for them to settle before moving on. The clinician will also need to judge which patients want to be touched as part of the process and also when the patient has 'shutdown' and the interview needs to be paused. Sometimes the interview will need to be stopped and resumed later.

**S – Strategy and summary** The clinician must ensure that the patient has understood what has been discussed. The interview should close with a further interview date (preferably soon) and giving a contact name as a safety net before the next interview and details regarding further sources of information. The clinician should offer the patient the opportunity to

meet their relatives if they could not be there at this time. Finally, the clinician should bid everyone goodbye, starting with the patient.

## Complaints and lawsuits

Many complaints result from poor communication or miscommunication. A lawsuit is the most extreme form of complaint and any clinician faced with such a scenario must seek specialist advice. The majority of complaints stem from the exasperation felt by patients who:

- Have not been able to get clear information
- Feel that they are owed an apology
- Are concerned that other patients will go through what they have.

Complaints should be dealt with as soon as possible. It is helpful to make an apology as an expression of regret; this is not an expression of guilt. Explain the reasons and circumstances behind the facts and explain how things will improve. Be honest and never alter the medical records.

## Culture and communication

Patients from minority cultures tend to get poorer healthcare than others of the same socioeconomic status, even when they speak the same language. Consultations tend to be shorter and with less engagement of the patient by the clinician. Cultural issues will affect the patient's behaviour, e.g. when to seek medical care, preference for a clinician of the same sex and family members talking for the patient. If an interpreter is necessary for the medical interview this should not be a family member, friend or even child. Advocates (interpreters from the patient's culture who can do more than translate) or the Language Line services should be used wherever possible. In these situations the clinician should still look and speak directly to the patient and not the interpreter.

## Patients with impaired faculties for communication

Patients with impaired hearing who use sign language may be helped by a signer. However, very few use sign language but many will lip-read. The latter can be facilitated by using a good light, using plain language, and checking for understanding and writing some things down. Conversation aids (microphones and amplifier, adapted textphones) and mobile phones with text messages can help. Patients with impaired vision will be helped by large print information sheets, Braille versions if available and audiotapes. Clinicians should avoid sudden touch during the interview, make more conscious efforts to use the patient's name and clearly explain what they are doing as they go along. Patients with impaired understanding or expression of words (aphasia) will be helped by speaking slowly with frequent pauses in a quiet place

without distractions. In this situation, closed questioning is often easier with a few key headings written down.

## Medical record keeping

Clinical records are an integral part of healthcare. They should contain a complete record of every encounter with the patient (history, examination, differential diagnosis, investigations and results, information given to the patient, consent, decisions made, treatment prescribed, follow-up and referrals) and a summary of any discussions with relatives (after obtaining patient consent). The records should also contain copies of any e-mail and text correspondence. When entering into e-mail or text correspondence with a patient, confidentiality must be respected and due thought given to who else might read the information.

A patient has a legal right to see their records and these are an essential part of the investigation into any complaint or claim for negligence. Computer records (electronic patient records, EPRs) are increasingly replacing written records; EPRs are more understandable, contain more information and reduce prescribing errors. Criteria for good records are:

- Clear, accurate and legible
- Every entry should be signed, dated and time of consultation recorded. The healthcare worker should also print their name and record where they have seen the patient e.g. emergency department, ward name, outpatients
- Entries should be written in pen and not retrospectively
- Records should never be altered. An additional note should be made, signed and dated alongside any mistake
- Records should always be kept secure. Any patient details kept electronically requires the computer to be encrypted.

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# Infectious diseases

Infection remains the main cause of morbidity and mortality in humans, particularly in developing areas where it is associated with poverty and overcrowding. Although the prevalence of infectious disease has reduced in the developing world as a result of increasing prosperity, immunization and antibiotic availability, antibiotic-resistant strains of microorganisms and diseases such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection have emerged. Increasing global mobility and climate change has aided the spread of infectious disease world-wide. In the elderly and immunocompromised the presentation of infectious disease may be atypical with few localizing signs and the normal physiological responses to infection (fever and sometimes neutrophilia) may be diminished or absent. A high index of suspicion is required in these populations.

The widespread use of antibiotics has led to bacterial resistance and changing patterns of disease, e.g. methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), which is a bacterium commonly found on the skin and/or in the noses of healthy people (they are 'colonized'). Infection is a result of MRSA spread (either from the same patient or between patients) from a site of colonization to a wound, burn or indwelling catheter where it causes clinical disease. The bacteria are resistant to multiple antibiotics, and infections are usually treated with vancomycin or teicoplanin. The risk of infection with MRSA is reduced by hospital staff washing their hands with antibacterial soap or alcohol hand scrub after contact with all patients, side-room isolation of colonized and infected patients (hospital staff wear disposable gowns and gloves before contact) and topical antibiotics for individuals colonized (identified by nasal and skin swabs) with MRSA.

Notification of specific infectious diseases is a legal requirement in the UK (Table 2.1) and these are indicated in the text by the superscripted abbreviation<sup>nd</sup> where appropriate. However, recognizing and reporting certain infections is international practice. Notification includes reporting of patient demographic details along with the disease that is being reported. This allows analyses of local and national trends, tracing of the source and the prevention of spread to others. Notification is in the first instance to the appropriate

**Table 2.1** Notifiable diseases in England & Wales under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984 and the Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 1988

|                     |  |                   |                            |
|---------------------|--|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Acute encephalitis  | Malaria  | Paratyphoid fever | Typhoid fever              |
| Acute poliomyelitis | Measles  | Plague            | Typhus fever               |
| Anthrax             | Meningitis; all types                          | Rabies            | Viral haemorrhagic fever   |
| Cholera             | Meningococcal septicaemia (without meningitis) | Relapsing fever   | Viral hepatitis; all types |
| Diphtheria          | Mumps  | Rubella           | Whooping cough             |
| Dysentery           | Ophthalmia neonatorum                          | Scarlet fever     | Yellow fever               |
| Food poisoning      |  | Smallpox          |                            |
| Leprosy             |  | Tetanus           |                            |
| Leptospirosis       |  | Tuberculosis      |                            |

officer (usually a consultant in communicable disease control) via the local health protection unit.

## Common investigations in infectious disease

- **Blood tests.** Full blood count, erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) and C-reactive protein (CRP), biochemical profile, urea and electrolytes are performed in the majority of cases.
- **Imaging.** X-ray, ultrasound, echocardiography, computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) are used to identify and localize infections. Positron emission tomography (PET) (p. 828) and single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT) have proved useful in localizing infection, especially when combined with CT. Biopsy or aspiration of tissue for microbiological examination may also be facilitated by ultrasound or CT guidance.
- **Radionuclide scanning** after injection of indium- or technetium-labelled white cells (previously harvested from the patient) may occasionally help to localize infection. It is most effective when the peripheral white cell count (WCC) is raised, and is of particular value in localizing occult abscesses.

- **Microbiological investigations**
  - *Microscopy and culture* of blood, urine, cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) and faeces should be performed as clinically indicated. Detection of a specific clostridial toxin is a more reliable test for diarrhoea caused by *Clostridium difficile* than culture of the organism itself.
  - *Immunodiagnostic tests*. These detect either a viral/bacterial antigen using a polyvalent antiserum or a monoclonal antibody or the serological response to infection.
  - *Nucleic acid detection*. Nucleic acid probes can be used to detect pathogen-specific nucleic acid in body fluids or tissue. The utility of this approach has been enhanced by amplification techniques such as the polymerase chain reaction (PCR), which increases the amount of target DNA/RNA in the sample to be tested.

## Pyrexia of unknown origin

Pyrexia (or fever) of unknown origin (PUO) is defined as 'a documented fever persisting for >2 weeks, with no clear diagnosis despite intelligent and intensive investigation'. Occult infection remains the most common cause in adults (Table 2.2).

### Investigations

A detailed history and examination is essential, and the examination should be repeated on a regular basis in case new signs appear. First-line investigations are usually repeated as the results may have changed since the tests were first performed:

- Full blood count, including a differential WCC and blood film
- ESR and CRP
- Serum urea and electrolytes, liver biochemistry and blood glucose
- Blood cultures – several sets from different sites at different times
- Microscopy and culture of urine, sputum and faeces
- Baseline serum for virology
- Chest X-ray
- Serum rheumatoid factor and antinuclear antibody.

Second-line investigations are performed in conditions that remain undiagnosed and when repeat physical examination is unhelpful:

- Abdominal imaging with ultrasound, CT or MRI to detect occult abscesses and malignancy
- Echocardiography for infective endocarditis
- Biopsy of liver and bone marrow occasionally; temporal artery biopsy (p. 777) should be considered in the elderly
- Determination of HIV status (after counselling).

**Table 2.2** Causes of pyrexia of unknown origin

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Infection (20–40%)         | Pyogenic abscess, e.g. liver, pelvic, subphrenic                          |
|                            | Tuberculosis  |
|                            | Infective endocarditis  |
|                            | Toxoplasmosis   |
|                            | Viruses: Epstein–Barr, cytomegalovirus                                    |
|                            | Primary human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection                      |
|                            | Brucellosis   |
|                            | Lyme disease  |
| Malignant disease (10–30%) | Lymphoma  |
|                            | Leukaemia   |
|                            | Renal cell carcinoma  |
|                            | Hepatocellular carcinoma  |
| Vasculitides (15–20%)      | Adult Still's disease   |
|                            | Rheumatoid arthritis  |
|                            | Systemic lupus erythematosus  |
|                            | Wegener's granulomatosis  |
|                            | Giant cell arteritis  |
|                            | Polymyalgia rheumatica  |
| Miscellaneous (10–25%)     | Drug fevers   |
|                            | Thyrotoxicosis  |
|                            | Inflammatory bowel disease  |
|                            | Sarcoidosis   |
|                            | Granulomatous hepatitis, e.g. tuberculosis, sarcoidosis                   |
|                            | Factitious fever (switching thermometers, injection of pyogenic material) |
|                            | Familial Mediterranean fever  |
| Undiagnosed (5–25%)        |   |

## Management

The treatment is of the underlying cause. Blind antibiotic therapy should not be given unless the patient is very unwell. In a few patients no diagnosis is reached after thorough investigation and in most of these the fever will resolve on follow-up.

## Septicaemia

- *Bacteraemia* refers to the transient presence of organisms in the blood (generally without causing symptoms) as a result of local infection or penetrating injury.
- *Septicaemia* is reserved for the clinical picture that results from the systemic inflammatory response to infection (p. 577).

Inflammation is normally intended to be a local and contained response to infection. Activated polymorphonuclear leucocytes, macrophages and lymphocytes release inflammatory mediators including tumour necrosis factor, interleukin-1 (IL-1), platelet-activating factor, IL-6, IL-8, interferon and eicosanoids. In some cases, mediator release exceeds the boundaries of the local environment leading to a generalized response that affects normal tissues. Clinical features include fever, tachycardia, an increase in respiratory rate and hypotension. Septicaemia has a high mortality without treatment, and demands immediate attention. The pathogenesis and management of septic shock is discussed on pages 574 and 577.

### Aetiology

Overall, about 40% of cases are the result of Gram-positive organisms and 60% of Gram-negative ones. Fungi are much less common but can occur, particularly in the immunocompromised. In the previously healthy adult, septicaemia may occur from a source of infection in the chest (e.g. with pneumonia), urinary tract (often Gram-negative rods) or biliary tree (commonly *Enterococcus faecalis*, *Escherichia coli*). Intravenous drug users develop septicaemia as a result of *Staph. aureus* and *Pseudomonas* sp. infection. Hospitalized patients are susceptible to infection from wounds, indwelling urinary catheters and intravenous cannulae.

### Clinical features

Fever, rigors and hypotension are the cardinal features of severe septicaemia. Lethargy, headache and a minor change in conscious level may be preceding features. In elderly and immunocompromised patients the clinical features may be quite subtle and a high index of suspicion is needed. Certain bacteria are associated with a particularly fulminating course:

- Staphylococci that produce an exotoxin called toxic shock syndrome toxin-1. The toxic shock syndrome is characterized by an abrupt onset of fever, rash, diarrhoea and shock. It is associated with infected tampons in women but may occur in anyone, including children.
- The Waterhouse–Friderichsen syndrome is most commonly caused by *Neisseria meningitidis*. This is a rapidly fatal illness (without treatment) with a purpuric skin rash and shock. Adrenal haemorrhage (and hypo-adrenalism) may or may not be present.

## Investigations

In addition to blood count, serum electrolytes and liver biochemistry:

- Blood cultures
- Cultures from possible source: urine, abscess aspirate, sputum
- In some cases: chest radiography, abdominal ultrasonography and CT.

## Management

Antibiotic therapy should be started immediately the diagnosis is suspected and after appropriate culture samples have been sent to the laboratory. The probable site of origin of sepsis will often be apparent, and knowledge of the likely microbial flora can be used to choose appropriate treatment. In cases where 'blind' antibiotic treatment is necessary, a reasonable combination would be intravenous gentamicin and piperacillin, or cefotaxime, with or without metronidazole for anaerobes. Therapy may subsequently be altered on the basis of culture and sensitivity results. Activated protein C is an endogenous protein that modulates the inflammatory cascade and has anti-inflammatory actions. Recombinant human activated protein C is added to full supportive treatment in patients with severe sepsis and multiorgan failure, but it is expensive and can increase bleeding.

## COMMON VIRAL INFECTIONS

Viral infections that are confined to a single organ (or system) are discussed in the relevant chapter, e.g. the common cold caused by one of the rhinoviruses is discussed in Chapter 11 on respiratory diseases.

### Measles<sup>nd</sup>

Measles is caused by infection with an RNA paramyxovirus. With the introduction of aggressive immunization policies, the incidence fell in the West (when immunization schedules were adhered to), but it remains common in developing countries, where it is associated with a high morbidity and mortality. One attack confers lifelong immunity. It is spread by droplet infection and the period of infectivity is from 4 days before and up to 4 days after the onset of the rash (after which the infected person can return to work or school).

### Clinical features

The incubation period is 8–14 days. Two distinct phases of the disease can be recognized.

**The pre-eruptive and catarrhal stage** There is fever, cough, rhinorrhoea, conjunctivitis and pathognomonic Koplik's spots in the mouth (small, grey, irregular lesions on an erythematous base, commonly on the inside of the cheek).

**Eruptive or exanthematous stage** Characterized by the presence of a maculopapular rash which starts on the face and spreads to involve the whole body. The rash becomes confluent and blotchy. It fades in about a week.

## Complications

These are uncommon in the healthy child but carry a high mortality in the malnourished or those with other diseases. Complications include gastroenteritis, pneumonia, otitis media, encephalitis and myocarditis. Rarely, persistence of the virus with reactivation pre-puberty results in subacute sclerosing panencephalitis with progressive mental deterioration and death.

## Management

The diagnosis is usually clinical and treatment is symptomatic. Measles vaccine is given to children of 13 months (9 months in developing countries) to prevent infection. In some countries, including the UK, it is given in combination with mumps and rubella vaccines (MMR).

## Mumps<sup>nd</sup>

Mumps is also caused by infection with a paramyxovirus, spread by droplets. The incubation period averages 18 days.

## Clinical features

It is primarily an infection of school-aged children and young adults. There is fever, headache and malaise, followed by painful parotid gland swelling. Less common features are orchitis, meningitis, pancreatitis, oophoritis, myocarditis and hepatitis.

## Management

Diagnosis is usually clinical. In doubtful cases demonstration of a rise in serum antibody titres is necessary for diagnosis. Treatment is symptomatic. The disease is prevented by administration of a live attenuated mumps virus vaccine (as MMR, see above). Children can return to school 5 days after the onset of the swelling.

## Rubella<sup>nd</sup>

Rubella ('German measles') is caused by an RNA virus and has a peak age of incidence of 15 years. The incubation period is 14–21 days. During the prodrome the patient complains of malaise, fever and lymphadenopathy (suboccipital, post-auricular, posterior cervical nodes). A pinkish macular rash appears on the face and trunk after about 7 days and lasts for up to 3 days.

## Diagnosis

The diagnosis may be suspected clinically and a definitive diagnosis is made by demonstrating a rising serum antibody titre in paired samples taken 2 weeks apart, or by the detection of rubella-specific IgM.

## Management

Treatment is symptomatic. Complications are uncommon but include arthralgia, encephalitis and thrombocytopenia. Prevention is with a live vaccine (see Measles). Children can return to school 6 days after the onset of the rash.

## Congenital rubella syndrome

Maternal infection during pregnancy may affect the fetus, particularly if infection is acquired in the first trimester. Congenital rubella syndrome is characterized by the presence of fetal cardiac defects, eye lesions (particularly cataracts), microcephaly, mental handicap and deafness. There may also be persistent viral infection of the liver, lungs and heart, with hepatomegaly, pneumonitis and myocarditis. The teratogenic effects of rubella underlie the importance of preventing maternal infection with immunization.

## Herpes viruses

### Herpes simplex virus (HSV)

HSV-1 causes:

- Herpetic stomatitis with buccal ulceration, fever and local lymphadenopathy
- Herpetic whitlow: damage to the skin over a finger allows access of the virus, with the development of irritating vesicles
- Keratoconjunctivitis
- Acute encephalitis
- Disseminated infection in immunocompromised patients.

HSV-2 is transmitted sexually and causes genital herpes, with painful genital ulceration, fever and lymphadenopathy. Anorectal infection may occur in male homosexuals. There may be systemic infection in the immunocompromised host, and in severe cases death may result from hepatitis and encephalitis. These divisions are not rigid, because HSV-1 can also give rise to genital herpes.

Recurrent HSV infection occurs when the virus lies dormant in ganglion cells and is reactivated by trauma, febrile illnesses and ultraviolet irradiation. This leads to recurrent labialis ('cold sores') or recurrent genital herpes.



## Investigations

The diagnosis is often clinical. A firm diagnosis is made by detection of virus from the lesions usually by HSV DNA detection by PCR. Herpes simplex encephalitis is discussed on page 768.

## Management

Oral aciclovir, famciclovir and valaciclovir for 5 days are useful if started while lesions are still forming; after this time there is little clinical benefit. Long-term suppressive therapy for 6–12 months reduces the frequency of attacks in recurrent genital herpes. Aciclovir and penciclovir is used topically as a cream for herpes labialis.

## Varicella zoster virus

**Varicella (chickenpox)** Primary infection with this virus causes chickenpox, which may produce a mild childhood illness, although this can be severe in adults and immunocompromised patients.

## Clinical features

After an incubation period of 14–21 days there is a brief prodromal period of fever, headache and malaise. The rash, predominantly on the face, scalp and trunk, begins as macules and develops into papules and vesicles, which heal with crusting. Complications include pneumonia and central nervous system involvement, presenting as acute truncal cerebellar ataxia.

## Investigations

The diagnosis is usually clinical but is confirmed by detection of viral DNA in vesicular fluid by PCR, electron microscopy or immunofluorescence.

## Management

Healthy children require no treatment. Anyone over the age of 16 is given antiviral therapy with aciclovir (if they present within 72 hours) because they are more at risk of severe disease. Because of the risk to both mother and fetus during pregnancy, pregnant women exposed to varicella zoster virus should receive prophylaxis with zoster-immune immunoglobulin (ZIG), and treatment with aciclovir if they develop chickenpox. Immunocompromised patients are treated in a similar manner. A live attenuated varicella vaccine is licensed for children in the USA and on a named patient basis in the U.K.

**Herpes zoster (shingles)** After the primary infection, herpes zoster remains dormant in dorsal root ganglia and/or cranial nerve ganglia, and reactivation causes shingles. A person with shingles (particularly if the rash

is weeping) could cause chickenpox in a non-immune person after close contact and touch.

## Clinical features

Pain and tingling in a dermatomal distribution precede the rash by a few days. The rash consists of papules and vesicles in the same dermatome. The most common sites are the lower thoracic dermatomes and the ophthalmic division of the trigeminal nerve.

## Management

Treatment is with oral acyclovir, valaciclovir or famciclovir given as early as possible. The main complication is post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN), which can be severe and last for years. Treatment is with carbamazepine or phenytoin. The development of PHN is reduced by prompt treatment with aciclovir or similar. Vaccination of all adults over the age of 60 years with varicella vaccine also reduces PHN.

## Infectious mononucleosis and Epstein–Barr virus infection

Infectious mononucleosis (glandular fever) is caused by the Epstein–Barr virus (EBV) and predominantly affects young adults. EBV is transmitted in saliva and by aerosol. EBV is also the major aetiological agent responsible for hairy leukoplakia in patients with acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), Burkitt's lymphoma, nasopharyngeal carcinoma, post-transplant lymphoma and the immunoblastic lymphoma of AIDS patients.

## Clinical features

The predominant symptoms of infectious mononucleosis are fever, headache, sore throat and a transient macular rash (more common following administration of amoxicillin given inappropriately for a sore throat). There may be palatal petechiae, cervical lymphadenopathy, splenomegaly and mild hepatitis. Rare complications include splenic rupture, myocarditis and meningitis. Cytomegalovirus (CMV), toxoplasmosis and acute HIV infection produce a similar illness.

## Investigations

Atypical lymphocytes (activated CD8-positive T lymphocytes) on a peripheral blood film strongly suggest EBV infection. Detection of heterophile antibodies is the diagnostic test of choice. The antibodies react to antigens from phylogenetically unrelated species and agglutinate sheep red cells (the Paul–Bunnell reaction) and horse red blood cells (the 'Monospot test'). Measurement of EBV-specific antibodies may be necessary in the few

patients with suspected infectious mononucleosis and negative heterophile antibodies.

## Management

Most cases require no treatment. Corticosteroids are given if there is neurological involvement (encephalitis, meningitis), when there is tonsillar enlargement causing respiratory obstruction and if there is severe thrombocytopenia or haemolysis.

## BACTERIAL INFECTIONS

Most of the bacterial infections are discussed under the relevant system, e.g. meningitis in Chapter 17 and pneumonia in Chapter 11.

### Lyme borreliosis (Lyme disease)

Lyme disease is a multisystem inflammatory disease caused by the spirochaete *Borrelia burgdorferi* and occasionally other *Borrelia* species. Infection is spread from deer and other wild mammals by *Ixodes* ticks. It is widespread in Europe and North America and recently has been reported in Africa and South America. It is most likely to occur in rural wooded areas in the spring and summer months.

### Clinical features

- The first stage follows 7–10 days after infection and is characterized by erythema migrans (EM) at the site of the tick bite and the associated non-specific complaints of fever, malaise, headache or myalgia. EM is pathognomic of Lyme disease and characterized by an erythematous rash expanding to 5–6 cm over several days with central clearing ('bull's eye' appearance).
- The second stage follows weeks to months later when some patients develop neurological problems (meningoencephalitis, cranial or polyneuropathies), cardiac problems (myocarditis or conduction defects) or arthritis.
- Patients may continue to have fatigue and musculoskeletal pain for months to years (sometimes called chronic Lyme disease) after the acute infection is treated, but there is no objective evidence that this is due to persistent infection with *Borrelia*.

### Investigations

The diagnosis can be made on the basis of typical clinical features in a patient living or visiting an endemic area.

*Serology* will show IgM antibodies in the first month and IgG antibodies late in the disease.

## Management

Amoxicillin or doxycycline are the treatments of choice in early-stage disease. Intravenous benzylpenicillin or ceftriaxone is given for later stages of disease. To prevent infection in tick-infested areas, repellents and protective clothing should be worn and ticks removed promptly from the site of a bite.

### Leptospirosis<sup>nd</sup>

This zoonosis is caused by a Gram-negative organism, *Leptospira interrogans*, which is excreted in animal urine and enters the host through a skin abrasion or intact mucous membranes. Individuals who work with animals or take part in water sports which bring them into close contact with rodents (e.g. boating lakes, diving) are most at risk.

### Clinical features

Following an incubation period of about 10 days, the initial leptospiraemic phase is characterized by fever, headache, malaise and myalgia, followed by an immune phase, which is most commonly manifest by meningism. Most recover uneventfully at this stage. A small proportion go on to develop hepatic and renal failure, haemolytic anaemia, and circulatory collapse (Weil's disease).

### Investigations

*Blood or CSF culture* can identify the organisms in the first week of the disease. The organism may be detected in the urine during the second week.

*Serology* will show specific IgM antibodies by the end of the first week.

### Management

Oral doxycycline is given for mild disease and intravenous penicillin or erythromycin for more severe disease. The complications of the disease should be treated appropriately.

### Fever in the returned traveller

Fever is a common problem in people travelling between countries. Malaria is the single most common cause of fever in recent travellers from the tropics to the UK. Falciparum malaria has the potential to be rapidly fatal, and so evaluation of fever in this group of patients is often regarded as a medical emergency. Table 2.3 lists the causes of fever in travellers from the tropics; in about 25% of cases no specific cause is found. The most common causes are discussed in greater detail below.

Viral haemorrhagic fever (VHF)<sup>nd</sup> is a rare cause of fever in travellers. Presentation with high fever and other symptoms occurs before the onset of

**Table 2.3** Causes of fever after travel to the tropics

|  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Malaria  | } 80% of specific infections* |
| Viral hepatitis  |                               |
| Febrile illness unrelated to foreign travel              |                               |
| Dengue fever   |                               |
| Enteric fever (typhoid and paratyphoid fevers)           |                               |
| Gastroenteritis  |                               |
| Rickettsia   |                               |
| Leptospirosis  |                               |
| Schistosomiasis  |                               |
| Amoebic liver abscess                                    |                               |
| Tuberculosis   |                               |
| Acute HIV infection                                      |                               |
| Others   |                               |
| <i>*Includes respiratory and urinary tract infection</i> |                               |

spontaneous haemorrhage (into skin, gut, lung). In suspected cases patients must be immediately isolated to prevent transmission and notification must be made to the laboratory handling any specimens. Lassa fever, Marburg virus and Ebola virus disease are mainly seen in sub-Saharan Africa and Congo-Crimean haemorrhagic fever in Asia and Africa.

## Approach to diagnosis

An accurate history and physical examination will help formulate an appropriate differential diagnosis and guide initial investigations. In addition to a full medical history, an accurate travel history must be obtained:

- A detailed travel history: dates (for assessment of incubation period; Table 2.4), countries visited, travel in rural (where infection may be more common) or urban areas, exposure to vectors (mosquitoes, ticks, flies, fresh water infested with snails containing schistosomes).
- Needle and blood exposure, e.g. blood transfusion or surgery, shared needles, acupuncture.
- Vaccination and prophylaxis: recent vaccination against yellow fever and hepatitis A and B is extremely effective; subsequent infection with these agents is very unlikely. Vaccination against typhoid is only partially effective; therefore infection is still a possibility. Malaria is always a possibility, even in those who have taken chemoprophylaxis and used anti-mosquito precautions.
- History of unprotected sexual intercourse may suggest an acute HIV (p. 45) or hepatitis B seroconversion illness (p. 153).

**Table 2.4** Typical incubation periods for tropical infections

| Incubation period   | Infection   |
|---------------------|---|
| Short (<10 days)    | Arboviral infections (including dengue fever), enteric bacterial infections, paratyphoid, plague, typhus, haemorrhagic fevers                     |
| Medium (10–21 days) | Malaria (but may be much longer), typhoid fever (rarely 3–60 days) scrub typhus, Lassa fever, African trypanosomiasis, brucellosis, leptospirosis |
| Long (>21 days)     | Viral hepatitis, tuberculosis, HIV, schistosomiasis, amoebic liver abscess, visceral leishmaniasis, filariasis                                    |

## Investigations

The initial work-up of a febrile patient who has recently travelled is listed below. Additional studies depend on exposure and other factors:

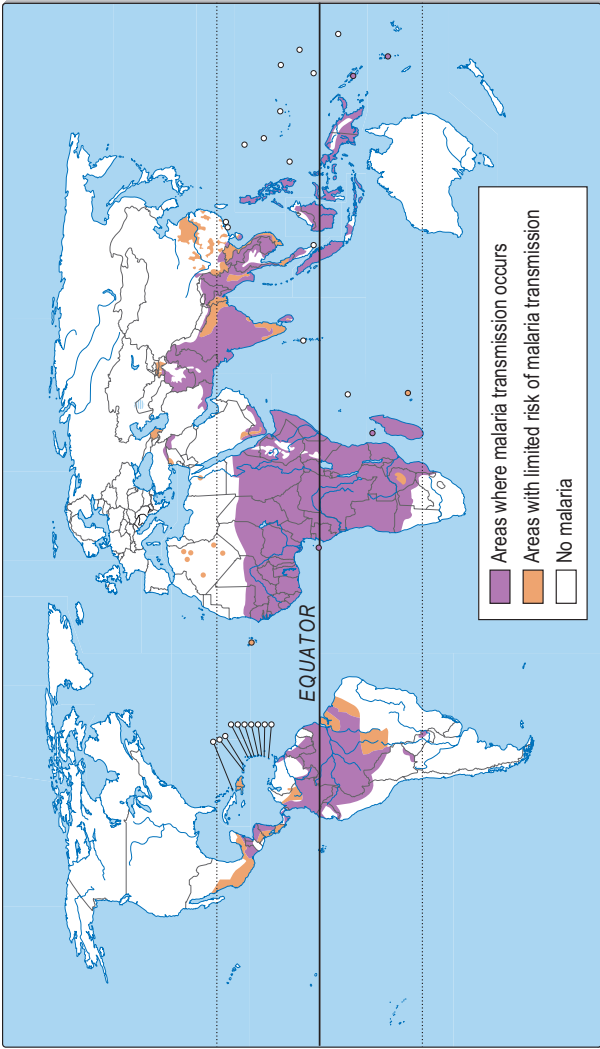
- Full blood count with differential WCC
- Thick and thin blood malaria films and malaria rapid antigen test; repeat after 12–24 hours if initial films negative and malaria suspected
- Liver biochemistry, urea and electrolytes, blood glucose
- Cultures of blood and stool
- Urine dip sticks ± microscopy and culture
- Chest X-ray
- 'Acute' serum for storage and subsequent antibody detection with paired convalescent serum at a later date.

## Malaria<sup>nd</sup>

Malaria is a protozoan parasite widespread in the tropics and subtropics (Fig. 2.1). Each year 500 million people are affected, with a mortality rate of 0.2%. In endemic areas mortality is principally in infants, and those who survive to adulthood acquire significant immunity. In hyperendemic areas an exaggerated immune response to repeated malarial infections leads to massive splenomegaly, anaemia and elevated IgM levels (hyperreactive malarial splenomegaly, tropical splenomegaly syndrome). Malaria parasites are scanty or absent in this syndrome and the disease responds to prolonged antimalarial treatment.

## Aetiology

Malaria is transmitted by the bite of infected female anopheline mosquitoes. Occasionally it is transmitted in contaminated blood (transfusions,



**Fig. 2.1** Malaria – geographical distribution. Reproduced from [www.who.int/fith/maps/malaria2007.jpg](http://www.who.int/fith/maps/malaria2007.jpg) with permission of the World Health Organization.

contaminated equipment, injecting drug users sharing needles). Rarely the parasite is transmitted by importation of infected mosquitoes by air (airport malaria).

Four malaria parasites infect humans; by far the most hazardous is *Plasmodium falciparum*, and the symptoms of infection with this virus can rapidly progress from an acute fever with rigors to severe multiorgan failure, coma and death. Once successfully treated this form does not relapse. The other malaria parasites, *P. vivax*, *P. ovale* and *P. malariae*, cause a more benign illness. However, *P. ovale* and *P. vivax* may relapse and *P. malariae* may run a chronic course over months or years.

## Pathogenesis

The infective form of the parasite (sporozoites) passes through the skin and via the bloodstream to the liver. Here they multiply inside hepatocytes as merozoites. After a few days the infected hepatocytes rupture, releasing merozoites into the blood where they are taken up by erythrocytes and pass through further stages of development, which terminate with the rupture of the red cell. Rupture of red blood cells contributes to anaemia and releases pyrogens, causing fever. Red blood cells infected with *P. falciparum* adhere to the endothelium of small vessels and the consequent vascular occlusion causes severe organ damage, chiefly in the gut, kidney, liver and brain. *P. ovale* and *P. vivax* remain latent in the liver, and this is responsible for the relapses that may occur.

## Clinical features

The incubation period varies:

- 10–14 days in *P. vivax*, *P. ovale* and *P. falciparum* infection
- 18 days to 6 weeks in *P. malariae* infection.

The onset of symptoms may be delayed (up to 3 months, 1 year in vivax malaria) in the partially immune or after prophylaxis. There is an abrupt onset of fever ( $>40^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), tachycardia and rigors, followed by profuse sweating some hours later. This may be accompanied by anaemia and hepatosplenomegaly.

*P. falciparum* infection (Table 2.5) is a medical emergency because patients may deteriorate rapidly. The following clinical forms are recognized and are more likely to occur when more than 1% of the red blood cells (RBCs) are parasitized:

- *Cerebral malaria* – diminished consciousness, confusion, convulsions, coma and eventually death. Hypoglycaemia, a complication of severe malaria, may present in a similar way and must be excluded.
- *Blackwater fever* – dark brown-black urine (haemoglobinuria) resulting from severe intravascular haemolysis.



**Table 2.5** Possible features of *P. falciparum* malaria

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Central nervous system | Impaired consciousness, convulsions      |
| Renal                  | Haemoglobinuria (blackwater fever)       |
|                        | Oliguria                                 |
|                        | Uraemia (acute tubular necrosis)         |
| Blood                  | Anaemia (haemolysis, dyserythropoiesis)  |
|                        | Disseminated intravascular coagulation   |
|                        | Bleeding, e.g. retinal haemorrhages      |
| Respiratory            | Tachypnoea                               |
|                        | Acute respiratory distress syndrome      |
| Metabolic              | Hypoglycaemia (particularly in children) |
|                        | Metabolic acidosis                       |
| Gastrointestinal       | Diarrhoea                                |
|                        | Jaundice                                 |
|                        | Splenic rupture                          |
| Other                  | Hyperpyrexia                             |
|                        | Shock and Gram-negative septicaemia      |

## Investigations

The conventional method for diagnosing malaria is light microscopy of a Giemsa-stained thick and thin blood smear. Thick smears are most useful for diagnosis of malaria and thin smears for quantification of the percentage of parasitized red cells and for species identification. Three smears should be taken over 48 hours before the diagnosis of malaria is ruled out. Rapid antigen tests are available for near-patient use. Full blood count, serum urea and electrolytes, liver biochemistry and blood glucose are checked in *falciparum* malaria to detect complications (Table 2.5).

## Management

Parasitological testing and confirmation of the diagnosis should be performed before antimalarial treatment is started except in remote rural areas (see below).

**Treatment of uncomplicated malaria** i.e. symptomatic malaria without signs of severity or evidence (clinical or laboratory) of vital organ dysfunction and parasite count <2%. Artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACT) are the recommended treatments for uncomplicated *P. falciparum* malaria and for treatment of *P. vivax* from chloroquine-resistant areas (Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and other parts of Oceania) (Table 2.6). Fixed-dose

**Table 2.6** Treatment of acute uncomplicated malaria in adults

| Type of malaria  | Oral drug treatment   |
|--|---|
| <i>Non-falciparum</i>  | Chloroquine: 600 mg followed by 300 mg at 6, 24 and 48 hours<br><i>or</i><br>ACT (except AS + SP) for chloroquine-resistant <i>p. vivax</i> malaria   |
| <i>P. falciparum</i>   | <b>First-line is ACT plus single dose primaquine (0.75 mg/kg)</b><br>a) Artemether plus lumefantrine (co-artemether/Riamet): 4 tablets twice a day for 3 days<br><i>or</i><br>b) Artesunate (AS, 4 mg/kg daily) plus one of amodiaquine (10 mg/kg daily), mefloquine (8.3 mg/kg daily) or sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine (SP, 25/1.25 mg/kg on day 1)<br><i>or</i><br>c) Dihydroartemisinin (4 mg/kg daily) plus piperazine (18 mg/kg daily) |
| In <i>p. vivax</i> and <i>p. ovale</i> after treatment of acute infection to eradicate liver cysts   | Oral primaquine* (15 mg base/day for <i>p. ovale</i> , 30 mg/day for <i>p. vivax</i> ) for 14 days  |
| <i>Chloroquine doses quoted are for the base drug.</i><br><i>*Check for glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency first (p. 207). Primaquine contraindicated in severe deficiency. In mild to moderate deficiency give 0.75 mg base/kg body weight once a week for 8 weeks.</i><br><i>ACT, artemisinin-based combination therapy.</i> |   |

combinations are preferred to the loose individual medicines co-dispensed. Antipyretics such as aspirin and paracetamol are given as necessary, and intravenous fluids may be required to combat dehydration and shock.

**Severe falciparum malaria** (indicated by the presence of any of the complications listed in Table 2.5) is a medical emergency, and optimal management may require admission to the intensive care unit (ITU). Expert advice should be sought from a malaria reference centre.

- Parenteral artesunate 2.4 mg/kg body weight i.v. or i.m. given at diagnosis (time 0) and then at 12 hours and 24 hours, then once a day until patient able to tolerate oral medication and complete treatment by a course of an ACT (Table 2.6).
- Quinine if artesunate is unavailable. Quinine 20 mg/kg loading dose in 5% dextrose intravenously over 4 hours, then 10 mg/kg over 4 hours

every 8 hours plus oral doxycycline 200 mg daily for 7 days. Omit loading dose if patient taking quinine or mefloquine already as prophylaxis. Treatment can be switched to oral quinine when the patient is stable and responding to treatment.

- Rectal artesunate is given in remote rural areas of some countries (Africa and Asia) to patients with suspected severe malaria before referral to a health facility for definitive treatment. Intramuscular artesunate or quinine are also used in this setting.

Intravenous glucose is given for hypoglycaemia and benzodiazepines for seizures. Early dialysis for acute kidney injury should be commenced and positive-pressure ventilation for non-cardiogenic pulmonary oedema.

## Prevention and control

Effective prevention of malaria includes the following elements (ABC):

- Awareness of risk
- Bite avoidance – using mosquito repellents, covering up with permethrin-impregnated clothing, sleeping under impregnated bednets
- Chemoprophylaxis.

As a result of changing patterns of resistance, advice about chemoprophylaxis should be sought before leaving for a malaria-endemic area. Further details can be found in national formularies or from travel advice centres. Prophylaxis does not afford full protection. Drug regimens should be started at least 1 week before departure and continued without interruption for 4 weeks after return. The rationale for this advice is to ensure therapeutic drug levels before travelling and to enable unwanted effects to be dealt with before departure. The continued use of drugs after returning home will deal with infection contracted on the last day of exposure. With the now widespread geographical prevalence of chloroquine resistant *P. falciparum*, mefloquine (250 mg weekly) is for many travellers the mainstay of malarial chemoprophylaxis. Malarone (proguanil/atovaquone) or doxycycline are alternatives to mefloquine.

## Dengue fever

Dengue viruses (a member of the *Flaviridae* family) are transmitted to humans through bites of infected female *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes. These are found mainly in Asia, Africa, Central and South America, where it is a common cause of fever and may be fatal. After an incubation period of 5–6 days there is an abrupt onset of fever, headache, retro-orbital pain and severe myalgia, often with a skin rash. Dengue haemorrhagic fever is a severe form with thrombocytopenia and spontaneous bleeding. The additional signs of circulatory failure (hypotension, tachycardia, poor peripheral perfusion) indicate dengue shock syndrome. Diagnosis during the acute phase is by detection

of the virus (by cell culture, reverse transcription PCR) or its components (non-structural protein, NS1) in the blood. Treatment is supportive particularly with adequate fluid resuscitation.

## Schistosomiasis

Schistosomiasis is virtually confined to travellers in southern and sub-Saharan Africa, especially those who undertake water sports in Lake Malawi. Acute symptoms are more common in non-immune individuals such as travellers. Parasite penetration through the skin may cause a localized pruritic papular rash ('swimmer's itch'). Parasite migration through the lungs and hepatic circulation 3–4 weeks after infection may cause fever, arthralgia and dry cough (Katayama fever). Chronic complications of *Schistosoma* infection usually occur only in endemic areas where there is a high parasite load (Table 2.10).

## Enteric fever<sup>nd</sup>

Typhoid fever and paratyphoid fever are caused by *Salmonella typhi* and *S. paratyphi* (types A, B and C), respectively. Humans are the only reservoir of infection and spread is faecal–oral. The incubation period is 10–14 days.

## Clinical features

There is an insidious onset of intermittent fever, headache and dry cough. In the second week of the illness there is an erythematous maculopapular rash ('rose spots') on the upper abdomen and thorax, splenomegaly, cervical lymphadenopathy and hepatomegaly. Diarrhoea may develop. Complications, usually occurring in the third week, are pneumonia, meningitis, acute cholecystitis, osteomyelitis, intestinal perforation and haemorrhage. Recovery occurs in the fourth week.

## Investigations

Diagnosis requires the culture of *S. typhi* or *S. paratyphi* from the patient. Organisms can be cultured from the blood, faeces and urine depending on the stage in the illness that individuals present for medical attention. Where the diagnosis is in doubt, bone marrow cultures may be positive even after starting antibiotics. A blood count shows non-specific leucopenia.

## Management and prevention

Treatment is with oral ciprofloxacin 500 mg twice daily for 7–14 days. Infections from the Indian subcontinent, Middle-East, and South-East Asia may be resistant to ciprofloxacin and treatment is with azithromycin 500 mg daily for 7 days. Infection is cleared when consecutive cultures of urine and faeces are negative. A few patients become chronic carriers, with the focus of

infection in the gall bladder and prolonged antibiotic treatment is indicated. Vaccination with injectable inactivated or oral live attenuated vaccines gives partial protection.

## Enterocolitis

Other *Salmonella* species (*S. choleraesuis* and *S. enteritidis*) cause a self-limiting infection presenting with diarrhoea and vomiting (Table 2.7) and are a cause of traveller's diarrhoea.

## GASTROENTERITIS AND FOOD POISONING<sup>ND</sup>

Most causes of acute diarrhoea (lasting less than 14 days) with or without vomiting are due to a gastrointestinal infection with bacteria, virus or protozoa. Not all cases of gastroenteritis are food poisoning as the pathogens are not always food- or water-borne, e.g. *C. difficile* as a complication of antibiotic use (see below). Individuals at increased risk of infection include infants and young children, the elderly, travellers (principally to developing countries), the immunocompromised and those with reduced gastric acid secretion (e.g. individuals using proton pump inhibitors or with pernicious anaemia). Viral gastroenteritis is a common cause of diarrhoea and vomiting in young children. Helminthic gut infections are rare in the West but relatively common in developing countries.

Bacteria can cause diarrhoea in three different ways resulting in two broad clinical syndromes: watery diarrhoea and bloody diarrhoea, i.e. dysentery (Table 2.7).

The clinical features based on the principal presenting symptom associated with the causative organisms of food poisoning are summarized in Table 2.8. Listeriosis (infection with *Listeria monocytogenes*) is associated with contaminated coleslaw, non-pasteurized soft cheeses and other packaged chilled foods. The most serious complication of listerial infection is meningitis, occurring perinatally and in immunocompromised adults. Hepatitis A (p. 149) and *Toxoplasma gondii* (p. 20) are also acquired from infected foods and their major effects are extraintestinal.

Most infectious causes of diarrhoea are self-limiting. Routine stool examination for culture and microscopy for ova and parasites (three samples, since excretion is intermittent) and stool testing for *C. difficile* toxin is not usually necessary other than in the following groups of patients: immunosuppressed, patients with inflammatory bowel disease (to distinguish a flare from infection), certain employees such as food handlers, bloody diarrhoea, persistent diarrhoea (>7 days, possible *Giardia*, *Cryptosporidium*, *Cyclospora*), severe symptoms (fever, volume depletion) or recent antibiotic treatment or hospitalization. The management of patients with acute diarrhoea includes adequate hydration and antimotility agents such as loperamide (other than those with bloody diarrhoea or fever). Antibiotic therapy is not given in most cases

**Table 2.7** Pathogenic mechanisms of bacterial gastroenteritis where established

| Pathogenesis      | Mode of action                         | Clinical presentation     | Examples   |
|-------------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| Mucosal adherence | Effacement of intestinal mucosa        | Moderate watery diarrhoea | Enteropathogenic <i>E. coli</i> (EPEC)<br>Enteroadgregative <i>E. coli</i> (EAggEC)<br>Diffusely adhering <i>E. coli</i> (DAEC)  |
| Mucosal invasion  | Penetration + destruction of mucosa    | Bloody diarrhoea          | <i>Shigella</i> spp.<br><i>Campylobacter</i> spp.<br>Enteroinvasive <i>E. coli</i> (EIEC)  |
| Toxin production  |  |                           |  |
| Enterotoxin       | Fluid secretion without mucosal damage | Profuse watery diarrhoea  | <i>Vibrio cholera</i><br><i>Salmonella</i> spp.<br><i>Campylobacter</i> spp.<br>Enterotoxigenic <i>E. coli</i> (ETEC)<br><i>Bacillus cereus</i><br><i>Staph. aureus</i> producing enterotoxin B<br><i>Clostridium perfringens</i> type A |
| Cytotoxin         | Damage to mucosa                       | Bloody diarrhoea          | <i>Salmonella</i> spp.<br><i>Campylobacter</i> spp.<br>Enterohaemorrhagic <i>E. coli</i> (EHEC)  |

since the illness is usually self-limited. Antibiotics are avoided in patients with suspected or proven enterohaemorrhagic *E. coli* infection as they may increase the risk of haemolytic uraemic syndrome. Empirical antibiotic therapy, e.g. ciprofloxacin and metronidazole, is given to patients with severe symptoms or bloody diarrhoea, pending the results of stool testing.

**Table 2.8** Major food-borne microbes by the principal presenting gastrointestinal symptom in immunocompetent adults<sup>nd</sup>

|                                     | Organism   | Source/vehicles   | Incubation period                                  | Diagnosis                                    | Recovery   |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| Vomiting                            | <i>Staph. aureus</i><br><i>Bacillus cereus</i><br>Norovirus  | Prepared food (e.g. sandwiches)<br>Rice, meat<br>Shellfish, prepared food   | 2–4 h<br>1–6 h<br>24–48 h                          | Diagnosis usually clinical for all organisms | <24 h<br>2–3 days<br>2–3 days  |
| Watery diarrhoea                    | <i>Clostridium perfringens</i><br>Enterotoxigenic <i>E. coli</i> (ETEC)<br>Enteric viruses<br><i>Cryptosporidium parvum</i> and<br><i>C. hominis</i><br><i>Cyclospora cayentanensis</i><br><i>Yersinia enterocolitica</i><br><i>Vibrio cholera</i> | All by contaminated food and water  | 8–22 h<br>24 h<br>Variable<br>5–28 days            | Stool culture                                | 2–3 days<br>1–4 days<br>Variable<br>7–14 days                                      |
| Diarrhoea with blood (dysentery)    | <i>Campylobacter jejuni</i><br>Non-typhoidal salmonella<br>Enterohaemorrhagic <i>E. coli</i> (usually serotype O157:H7)*<br><i>Shigella</i> spp.<br><i>Vibrio parahaemolyticus</i>   | Cattle and poultry – meat and milk<br>Cattle and poultry – eggs, meat<br>Cattle – meat, milk<br>Contaminated food and water<br>Contaminated seafood | 48–96 h<br>12–48 h<br>12–48 h<br>24–48 h<br>2–48 h | Stool culture                                | 3–5 days<br>3–6 days, may be up to 2 weeks<br>10–12 days<br>7–10 days<br>1–12 days |
| Non-gastrointestinal manifestations | <i>Clostridium botulinum</i><br>Paralysis due to neuromuscular blockade<br><i>Listeria monocytogenes</i><br>Meningitis   | Environment – bottled or canned food<br>Contaminated packaged chilled foods   | 18–24 h<br>Up to 6 weeks                           | Toxin in food or faeces<br>CSF culture       | 10–14 days<br>Variable   |

\*It is vital that there is low threshold for suspecting *E. coli* O157 infection in gastroenteritis because it can cause serious complications. 1–15% progress to haemolytic uraemic syndrome (acute kidney injury, haemolytic anaemia, thrombocytopenia). Antibiotics are contraindicated in *E. coli* O157 infection.

## *Clostridium difficile*

*C. difficile* is responsible for some cases of antibiotic-related diarrhoea and nearly all cases of pseudomembranous colitis. It may also induce a relapse in patients with inflammatory bowel disease.

### Pathology and clinical features

*C. difficile* can be cultured from the stool of 3% of healthy adults and about one-third of hospital inpatients. Most colonized patients remain asymptomatic. Clinical disease develops when the normal colonic microbiota is altered, usually by antibiotics, and creates an environment which favours the proliferation of *C. difficile*. Infection with toxigenic strains of *C. difficile* causes colonic inflammation and diarrhoea by secretion of toxins A and B, which induces expression of cytokines such as IL-8 (chemoattractant for neutrophils) in intestinal epithelial cells, causes loss of barrier function and causes cell death by apoptosis. There is focal epithelial ulceration and an inflammatory exudate that appears as a pseudomembrane on endoscopic examination. The clinical picture varies from mild diarrhoea to life-threatening severe disease with profuse diarrhoea, abdominal pain and toxic megacolon.

**Diagnosis** is by demonstration of toxins A and/or B in stool samples (may be false negative) or the characteristic appearance of pseudomembranes at endoscopy.

### Management

**Treatment of the acute episode** is to prevent cross-infection (isolate hospitalized patients in a side-room, disposable gloves and aprons for staff having patient contact, washing hands with soap and water before and after patient contact), stop offending antibiotics where possible and treat with oral metronidazole (500 mg three times daily) for 10–14 days. Vancomycin (125 mg four times a day) is given for severe disease. Recurrent disease (relapse of diarrhoea after initial resolution of infection) occurs in 15–35% of cases and is usually treated with pulsed tapering doses of vancomycin. Treatment options for refractory disease, particularly if severe, are escalating doses of oral vancomycin (up to 500 mg four times a day), vancomycin administered as a retention enema, rifampicin, intravenous immunoglobulin (400 mg/kg) or occasionally colectomy but post-operative mortality is high.

**Prevention of *C. difficile* infection** is by preventing cross infection (see above) and by reducing overprescribing and inappropriate antibiotic use (avoid broad spectrum agents, use the shortest treatment course likely to be effective, avoid intravenous antibiotics and use single antibiotic doses for surgical prophylaxis).



## Travellers' diarrhoea

This is one of the most common illnesses in people who travel internationally and affects 20–50% of travellers depending on destination. The risk is highest in people travelling to areas with poor food and water hygiene.

### Clinical features

There is diarrhoea (with or without blood), abdominal cramps, fever, nausea and vomiting which usually resolve without treatment over several days. A prolonged illness lasting weeks is more likely to be caused by protozoan parasites (Table 2.9).

### Treatment and prevention

To reduce the risk of infection, travellers are advised to drink bottled water, peel fruit before eating it and avoid salads because the ingredients may have been washed in contaminated water. Antibiotic prophylaxis with ciprofloxacin is not indicated for most travellers but is given when a trip is vital or when an underlying medical illness would be compromised by diarrhoea, e.g. patients with an ileostomy, immunosuppression and chronic kidney disease.

Treatment of travellers' diarrhoea is symptomatic with rehydration and antidiarrhoeal agents, e.g. loperamide. Empirical antibiotics are given to patients with moderate to severe symptoms (fever, tenesmus, bloody

**Table 2.9** Causes of travellers' diarrhoea

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Bacteria – 70–90% of cases | <i>E. coli</i> (enterotoxigenic)            |
|                            | <i>E. coli</i> (enteroaggregative)          |
|                            | <i>Shigella</i> spp.                        |
|                            | <i>Salmonella</i> spp.                      |
|                            | <i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>                 |
|                            | <i>Aeromonas</i> and <i>Plesimonas</i> spp. |
| Viruses – 10%              | <i>Vibrio cholera</i>                       |
|                            | Rotavirus                                   |
|                            | Noroviruses*                                |
| Protozoa – <5%             | <i>Giardia intestinalis</i>                 |
|                            | <i>Entamoeba histolytica</i>                |
|                            | <i>Cryptosporidium parvum</i>               |
|                            | <i>Cyclospora cayetanensis</i>              |

*Note: Co-infection with multiple pathogens occurs in approximately 10% of cases.*

*\*Often associated with outbreaks of diarrhoea on cruise ships and in holiday resorts.*

diarrhoea) after obtaining a stool sample. Fluoroquinolones, e.g. oral ciprofloxacin (500 mg twice daily for 1–3 days depending on symptoms) are used in most cases. Rifaximin (poorly absorbed derivative of rifamycin) is used in areas where *E. coli* predominates and azithromycin is increasingly used due to emergence of fluoroquinolone resistant *Campylobacter*. Colonoscopy and biopsy are occasionally necessary in patients with persistent diarrhoea, when an alternative diagnosis to travellers' diarrhoea, such as inflammatory bowel disease seems likely. Irritable bowel syndrome (p. 117) can occur after travellers' diarrhoea.

## Amoebiasis<sup>nd</sup>

Amoebiasis is caused by the protozoal organism *Entamoeba histolytica*. Infection occurs world-wide, although much higher incidence rates are found in the tropics and subtropics. Transmission of infection is by ingestion of cysts in contaminated food and water or spread directly by person-to-person contact.

### Clinical features

**Intestinal amoebiasis (amoebic dysentery)** *E. histolytica* invades the colonic epithelium leading to tissue necrosis and ulceration. Ulceration may deepen and progress under the mucosa to form typical flask-like ulcers. The presentation varies from mild bloody diarrhoea to fulminating colitis, with the risk of toxic dilatation, perforation and peritonitis. An amoeboma (inflammatory fibrotic mass) may develop, commonly in the caecum or rectosigmoid region, which may bleed, cause obstruction or intussusception, or be mistaken for a carcinoma.

**Amoebic liver abscess** An amoebic liver abscess (often single and in right lobe of liver) develops when organisms invade through the bowel serosa, enter the portal vein and pass into the liver. There is tender hepatomegaly, a high swinging fever and profound malaise. There may not be a history of colitis.

### Investigations

**Serology** Amoebic fluorescent antibody test (FAT) is positive in 90% of patients with liver abscess and in 60–70% of patients with active colitis.

**Colonic disease** Microscopic examination of fresh stool or colonic exudate obtained at sigmoidoscopy shows the motile trophozoites, which contain red blood cells. *E. histolytica* must be distinguished by molecular techniques from the non-pathogenic *E. dispar*, which appears identical and is seen frequently in stools in patients from amoebic areas.

**Liver disease** Liver abscesses should be considered when the serum alkaline phosphatase is elevated. Liver ultrasonography or CT scan will confirm the presence of an abscess.

## Differential diagnosis

Amoebic colitis must be differentiated from the other causes of bloody diarrhoea: inflammatory bowel disease, bacillary dysentery, *E. coli*, *Campylobacter* sp., salmonellae and, rarely, pseudomembranous colitis. Amoebic liver abscess must be differentiated from a pyogenic abscess and/or a hydatid cyst.

## Management

- *Colitis* – oral metronidazole, 800 mg three times daily for 5 days, followed by a luminal amoebicide such as diloxanide furoate to clear the bowel of parasites.
- *Liver abscess* – metronidazole 500 mg three times daily for 5 days. A large tense abscess may require percutaneous drainage under ultrasound guidance.

## Control and prevention

Improved standards of personal hygiene and water supply are required. Travellers are advised to drink bottled water. Individual chemoprophylaxis is not advised because the risk of acquiring infection is low. There is no effective vaccine.

### Shigellosis (bacillary dysentery)<sup>nd</sup>

Shigellosis is an acute self-limiting intestinal infection which occurs worldwide but is more common in tropical countries and in areas of poor hygiene. Transmission is by the faecal–oral route. The four *Shigella* species (*S. dysenteriae*, *S. flexneri*, *S. boydii* and *S. sonnei*) invade and damage the intestinal mucosa (Table 2.8). Some strains of *S. dysenteriae* secrete a cytotoxin which results in diarrhoea. Differential diagnosis is from other causes of bloody diarrhoea (see above). Sigmoidoscopic appearances may be the same as those in inflammatory bowel disease. Ciprofloxacin 500 mg orally twice daily is the treatment of choice.

### Cholera<sup>nd</sup>

Cholera is caused by the Gram-negative bacillus, *Vibrio cholerae* (Tables 2.7 and 2.8). Infection is common in tropical and subtropical countries in areas of poor hygiene. Infection is by the faecal–oral route, and spread is predominantly by ingestion of water contaminated with the faeces of infected humans. There is no identified animal reservoir.

## Pathophysiology and clinical features

Following attachment to and colonization of the small intestinal epithelium, *V. cholerae* produces its major virulence factor, cholera toxin. The toxin binds

to its enterocyte surface receptor (mucopolysaccharide  $G_1$ ) which in turn activates cyclic AMP. The increase in cAMP activates intermediates (e.g. protein kinase and  $Ca^{2+}$ ) which then act on the apical membrane causing chloride ion secretion (with water) and inhibition of sodium and chloride absorption. This produces massive secretion of isotonic fluid into the intestinal lumen. Cholera toxin also increases serotonin release from enterochromaffin cells in the gut, which contributes to the secretory activity and diarrhoea. Additional enterotoxins have been described in *V. cholerae* which may contribute to its pathogenic effect. Profuse watery diarrhoea ('rice-water stools') may result in dehydration, hypotension and death.

## Management

Management is aimed at effective rehydration, which is mainly oral. Intravenous fluids are given in severe cases. The mechanism of action of oral rehydration solutions (ORS) depends on the fact that there is a glucose-dependent sodium absorption mechanism not related to cAMP and thus unaffected by cholera toxin. The World Health Organization ORS contains sodium (75 mmol/L) and glucose (75 mmol/L), along with potassium, chloride and citrate. Cereal-based regimens also contain cooked rice. Single dose azithromycin 1 g helps to eradicate the infection, decrease stool output and shorten the duration of the illness.

## Prevention and control

Good hygiene and sanitation are the most effective measures for the reduction of infection. Oral live attenuated and killed vaccine are recommended in potential or actual outbreak situations.

## Giardiasis

*Giardia intestinalis* is a flagellated protozoan that is found world-wide but is more common in developing countries. It is a cause of travellers' diarrhoea and may cause prolonged symptoms (see later).

## Clinical features

The clinical features are the result of damage to the small intestine, with subtotal villous atrophy in severe cases. There is diarrhoea, nausea, abdominal pain and distension, with malabsorption and steatorrhoea in some cases. Repeated infections can result in growth retardation in children.

## Investigations

Treatment is often given based on clinical suspicion. If necessary, the diagnosis is made by finding cysts on stool examination (but negative stool does not exclude the diagnosis) or parasites in duodenal aspirates or biopsies.

## Management

Metronidazole 2 g as a single dose daily for 3 days will cure most infections; some patients need two or three courses. Alternative drugs include tinidazole, mepacrine and albendazole.

## HELMINTHIC INFECTIONS

The helminths or worms that infect humans are of three classes (Table 2.10). In the UK only three species are commonly encountered: *Enterobius vermicularis*, *Ascaris lumbricoides* and *Taenia saginata*. Other species occur in tropical and subtropical countries and may be imported into the UK. A raised blood eosinophil count (eosinophilia) occurs at some stage in nearly all helminth infections.

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) remain endemic in all societies, and the range of diseases spread by sexual activity continues to increase. The three common presenting symptoms are:

- Urethral discharge (see below)
- Genital ulcers (see below)
- Vaginal discharge – this is caused by *Candida albicans*, *Trichomonas vaginalis*, *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, *Chlamydia trachomatis* and herpes simplex. Bacterial vaginosis is also characterized by a vaginal discharge but is not regarded as an STI. It occurs when the normal lactobacilli of the vagina are replaced by a mixed flora of *Gardnerella vaginalis* and anaerobes, resulting in an offensive discharge. Other causes of vaginal discharge are retained tampon, chemical irritants, cervical polyps and neoplasia.

STIs predominantly seen in the tropics are chancroid (caused by *Haemophilus ducrei*), donovanosis (*Klebsiella granulomatis*) and lymphogranuloma venereum (*Chlamydia trachomatis* types LGV 1, 2 and 3). They present with genital ulceration and inguinal lymphadenopathy.

The aspects of management of all the STIs are:

- Accurate diagnosis and effective treatment
- Screening for other STIs including HIV and hepatitis viruses
- Patient education
- Contact tracing: the patient's sexual partners must be traced so that they can be treated, thereby preventing the disease from spreading further
- Follow-up to ensure that infection is adequately treated.

**Table 2.10** Summary of intestinal diseases caused by helminths (parasitic worms)

| Helminth   | Clinical manifestations  | Diagnosis  | Treatment of choice |
|--|--|--|---------------------|
| <b>Nematodes (roundworms)</b>  |  |  |                     |
| Small intestine  |  |  |                     |
| <i>Strongyloides stercoralis</i>   | Local dermatitis at site of skin penetration, diarrhoea, malabsorption, disseminated disease. Symptoms may continue for years as a result of autoinfection | Larvae in fresh stool, detection of specific serum antibodies (serology) | Tiabendazole        |
| Hookworm:<br><i>Ancylostoma duodenale</i> ,<br><i>Necator americanus</i> | Local dermatitis at the site of skin penetration, nausea, epigastric pain, iron deficiency anaemia   | Detection of eggs in faeces  | Mebendazole         |
| Roundworm:<br><i>Ascaris lumbricoides</i>                                | Often asymptomatic. Vomiting, abdominal discomfort, anorexia, intestinal obstruction. Pulmonary eosinophilia after migration to the lungs                  | Detection of eggs in faeces  | Levamisole          |
| <i>Trichinella spiralis</i>  | Abdominal pain and diarrhoea. Larvae penetrate the bowel wall and invade striated muscle causing pain  | Serology, muscle biopsy  | Albendazole         |
| <i>Toxocara canis</i>  | Penetration of small intestine to lungs (bronchospasm), liver (hepatomegaly), heart, brain and eye   | Serology   | Albendazole         |
| Large intestine  |  |  |                     |
| Whipworm:<br><i>Trichuris trichiura</i>                                  | Often asymptomatic. Mucosal damage may result in bloody diarrhoea  | Detection of eggs in faeces  | Pyrantel pamoate    |
| Threadworm:<br><i>Enterobius vermicularis</i>                            | Pruritus ani   | Apply adhesive tape to perineum and identify eggs                        | Mebendazole         |

|                             |   |  |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Water-borne                 | <i>Schistosoma</i> species  | Parasite eggs, released in urine or faeces, hatch on contact with water before infecting fresh water snails. Snail vectors release cercariae which penetrate human skin (causing swimmer's itch). Worms migrate to pelvic veins and bladder ( <i>S. haematobium</i> ) causing haematuria, hydronephrosis, renal failure. <i>S. mansoni</i> and <i>S. japonicum</i> migrate to mesenteric veins and bowel causing bloody diarrhoea, intestinal strictures, hepatic fibrosis and portal hypertension | Detection of eggs in urine, stool or rectal biopsy. Serology                    | Praziquantel  |
| Food-borne                  | Liver flukes ( <i>Clonorchis sinensis</i> , <i>Opisthorchis felineus</i> , <i>O. viverrini</i> )<br><i>Fasciola hepatica</i><br>Lung fluke ( <i>Paragonimus</i> ) | Cholangitis, biliary carcinoma<br><br>Fever, cough, haemoptysis  | Eggs on stool microscopy<br><br>Ova on sputum or in stool                       | Praziquantel<br><br>Triclabendazole<br>Praziquantel |
| <b>Cestodes (tapeworms)</b> |   |  |   |   |
|                             | <i>Taenia saginata</i>  | Beef tapeworm acquired by eating insufficiently cooked beef. Causes abdominal pain and malabsorption   | Detection of eggs on stool microscopy   | Praziquantel  |
|                             | <i>Taenia solium</i>  | Pork tapeworm from undercooked pork. Larvae penetrate the intestinal wall and cause disseminated disease involving skin, skeletal muscle and brain (fits, focal signs)   | Serology, imaging of cysts in muscle and brain by X-ray, CT or MRI              | Albendazole   |
|                             | <i>Echinococcus granulosus</i>  | Hydatid disease acquired by eating meat (from sheep, cattle) contaminated with ova excreted by dogs. Large cysts develop in liver, lung and brain. Anaphylactic reactions if cyst contents escape  | Ultrasound, CT and MRI show the cysts and daughter cysts. Diagnosis by serology | Surgical excision and albendazole                   |

## Urethritis

Urethritis in men presents with urethral discharge and dysuria. It is often asymptomatic in women. The causes are infection with *N. gonorrhoeae*, *C. trachomatis*, *Ureaplasma urealyticum*, *Bacteroides* sp. and *Mycoplasma* sp.

## Gonorrhoea

The causative organism, *N. gonorrhoeae* (gonococcus), is a Gram-negative intracellular diplococcus which infects epithelium, particularly of the urogenital tract, rectum, pharynx and conjunctivae.

### Clinical features

The incubation period ranges from 2 to 14 days. In men the symptoms are purulent urethral discharge and dysuria. In men who have sex with men proctitis may produce anal pain, discharge and itch. Women may be asymptomatic or complain of vaginal discharge, dysuria and intermenstrual bleeding. Complications include salpingitis, Bartholin's abscess and perihepatitis (Fitzhugh–Curtis) in women, epididymitis and prostatitis in men, and systemic spread with a rash and arthritis (p. 297). Infants born to infected mothers may develop ocular infections (ophthalmia neonatorum).

### Diagnosis

Gram stain and culture of a swab are taken from the urethra in men and the endocervix in women. Blood culture and microscopy of synovial fluid should be performed in cases of disseminated gonorrhoea. Nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs) using urine specimens are non-invasive and highly sensitive, but may give false-positive results.

### Management

Single-dose oral treatment with cefixime (400 mg), ceftriaxone (250 mg i.m.) or spectinomycin (2 g i.m.) successfully treats uncomplicated anogenital infection. Single-dose oral amoxicillin 3 g with probenecid 1 g, ciprofloxacin (500 mg) or ofloxacin (400 mg) is used in areas with a low prevalence of antibiotic resistance. Longer courses are required for complicated infections. Culture tests should be repeated at least 72 hours after treatment is complete.

## Chlamydia urethritis

*C. trachomatis* infection presents in men with urethral discharge and dysuria. In women, infection may be asymptomatic and only found during investigations for infertility (secondary to salpingitis and fallopian tube blockage). The diagnosis of chlamydial urethritis is made by the NAAT. Treatment is with



doxycycline (100 mg 12 hourly for 7 days) or single-dose azithromycin 1 g (in pregnancy).

## Genital ulcers

The infective causes of genital ulceration in the UK include syphilis, herpes simplex and herpes zoster. Non-infective causes are Behçet's disease, toxic epidermal necrolysis (p. 813), Stevens–Johnson syndrome (p. 813), carcinoma and trauma.

## Syphilis

Syphilis is a chronic systemic disease which is acquired or congenital (transplacentally from mother to fetus). The causative organism, *Treponema pallidum*, is a motile spirochaete which enters the new host through breaches in squamous or columnar epithelium.

### Early stages

**Primary infection** After an incubation period of 10–90 days a papule develops at the site of inoculation. This ulcerates to become a painless, firm chancre, which heals spontaneously within 2–3 weeks.

**Secondary infection** Between 4 and 10 weeks after the appearance of the primary lesion constitutional symptoms with fever, sore throat and arthralgia appear. There may be generalized lymphadenopathy, widespread skin rash (except the face), superficial ulcers in the mouth and on the genitalia (snail-track ulcers) and condylomata lata (warty perianal lesions). Many sites may be affected (hepatitis, nephritis, arthritis, meningitis). In most patients symptoms subside within 3–12 weeks.

### Late stages

**Tertiary syphilis** This occurs after a latent period of 2 years or more. The characteristic lesion is a gumma (granulomatous, sometimes ulcerating lesion) occurring in the skin, bones, liver and testes. Cardiovascular and neurosyphilis are discussed on pages 465 and 770.

**Congenital syphilis** 30% are stillborn. Otherwise, 2–6 weeks after birth there is nasal discharge, skin and mucous membrane lesions, and failure to thrive. Signs of late syphilis (see above) appear after 2 years of age, when there are also characteristic bone ('sabre tibia') and teeth abnormalities (Hutchinson's teeth) as a result of earlier damage.

## Diagnosis

- *Dark ground microscopy of fluid* taken from lesions shows organisms in primary and secondary disease. Serological tests may be negative in primary disease.

- **Serology.** The *T. pallidum* enzyme immunoassay (EIA) is the screening test of choice. A positive test is then confirmed with the *T. pallidum* haemagglutination assay (TPHA) and Venereal Disease Research Laboratory (VDRL) test. The VDRL test is detectable within 3–4 weeks of infection; it becomes negative in treated patients and in some untreated patients with late tertiary syphilis. Other diseases, e.g. autoimmune disease and malignancy, may give false-positive results. The *T. pallidum* EIA, TPHA and the fluorescent treponemal antibody test are positive in most patients with primary disease, and remain positive in spite of treatment. They do not distinguish between syphilis and other treponemes, e.g. yaws.

## Management

- **Early stages** – intramuscular procaine benzylpenicillin (procaine penicillin) 600 mg for 10 days. Erythromycin or doxycycline if the patient is allergic to penicillin.
- **Late stages** – extend early-stage treatment for a further week.

The Jarisch–Herxheimer reaction, characterized by malaise, fever and headache, occurs most commonly in secondary syphilis and is the result of release of TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-6 and IL-8 when organisms are killed by antibiotics.

## HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV) AND AIDS

HIV is the cause of AIDS. Estimates for 2007 are that on a world-wide scale, 33 million people are infected with HIV and on a daily basis, 6800 acquire HIV and 5700 die of AIDS. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most seriously affected and in countries with the highest prevalence 33% of 15-year-olds will die of HIV. However, infection rates are rising exponentially in eastern Europe and parts of Central Asia. Highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) has transformed the outcome for individuals with HIV infection but is unavailable in the poorer parts of the world. The challenge in developed countries is to diagnose HIV infection at an earlier stage (one-third of HIV infections in the UK remain undiagnosed) and thus reduce transmission and avoid late diagnosis, which is associated with an impaired response to HAART.

## Routes of acquisition

Transmission is by:

- **Sexual intercourse (vaginal and anal).** World-wide, heterosexual intercourse accounts for the vast majority of infections. In the UK sex between men accounts for over half the infections. Coexistent STIs, especially those causing genital ulceration, enhance transmission.
- **Mother to child** Transmission can occur in utero, although the majority of infections takes place perinatally or via breast milk.

- *Contaminated blood, blood products and organ donations.* The risk is now minimal in developed countries since the introduction of screening blood products in 1985.
- *Contaminated needles.* This is a major route of transmission of HIV among intravenous drug addicts who share needles and syringes. Healthcare workers have a risk of approximately 0.3% following a single needle-stick injury with known HIV-infected blood.

HIV infection is not spread by ordinary social or household contact.

## Pathogenesis of HIV infection

There are two types, HIV-1 and HIV-2. HIV-2 is mainly confined to West Africa, runs a more indolent course than HIV-1 and may not respond to many of the drugs used in HIV-1. The virus consists of an outer envelope and an inner core. The core contains RNA and the enzyme reverse transcriptase, which allows viral RNA to be transcribed into DNA and then incorporated into the host cell genome (i.e. a retrovirus). The rapid emergence of viral quasispecies (closely related but genetically distinct variants) is due to the high mutation rate of reverse transcriptase and the high rate of viral turnover. This genetic diversification has implications for the evolution of viral variants with resistance to antiviral drugs.

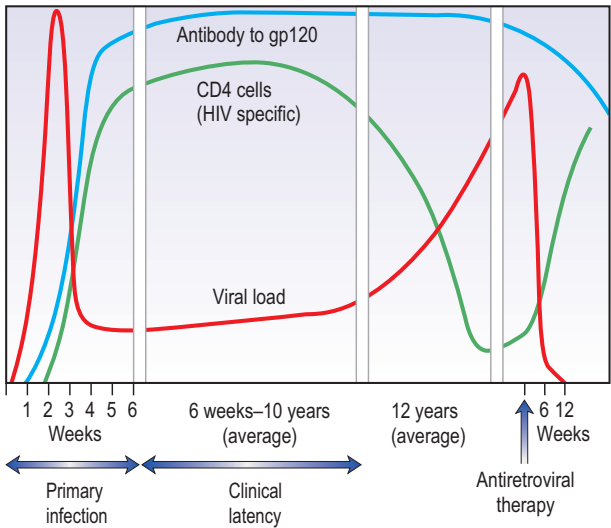
HIV surface glycoprotein gp120 binds to the CD4 molecule on host lymphocytes and other cells bearing the CD4 receptor. The interaction between CD4 and HIV surface glycoprotein together with host chemokine co-receptors CCR5 and CXCR4 is responsible for HIV entry into cells and release of viral RNA. There is a progressive and severe depletion of infected CD4 helper lymphocytes which results in host susceptibility to infections with intracellular bacteria and mycobacteria. The coexisting antibody abnormalities predispose to infections with capsulated bacteria, e.g. *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Haemophilus influenzae*. The clinical illness associated with HIV infection is due to this immune dysfunction, and also to a direct effect of HIV on certain tissues.

## Natural history of HIV infection

The typical pattern of HIV infection is shown in Fig. 2.2. Throughout the course of HIV infection, viral load and immunodeficiency progress steadily, despite the absence of observed disease during the latency period.

HIV infection is divided into the following stages:

- *Category A* includes primary HIV infection or seroconversion. Illness occurs in most individuals 2–4 weeks after infection. Symptoms are non-specific and include fever, maculopapular rash, myalgia, headache/aseptic meningitis. The illness lasts up to 3 weeks and recovery is usually complete.



**Fig. 2.2** Schematic representation of the course of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. The effect of antiretroviral therapy is also shown.

- **Clinical latency.** Most are asymptomatic. A subgroup of patients have *persistent generalized lymphadenopathy* defined as lymphadenopathy (>1 cm) at two or more extra inguinal sites for more than 3 months in the absence of causes other than HIV infection. There may be splenomegaly.
- **Category B.** Early symptomatic HIV infection is associated with a rise in viral load, a fall in CD4 count and development of symptoms and signs due to direct HIV effects and immunosuppression. Examples of category B conditions include bacillary angiomatosis (*Bartonella* infection causing subcutaneous nodules), candidiasis (oral pharyngeal), oral hairy leucoplakia, herpes zoster involving more than one dermatome, idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura, listeriosis, pelvic inflammatory disease and peripheral neuropathy.
- **Category C** includes patients with clinical conditions that indicate that they have severe immunosuppression (AIDS; Table 2.11).

## Clinical features

The spectrum of illnesses associated with HIV infection is broad and is the result of direct HIV infection (Table 2.12), infections associated with

**Table 2.11** AIDS-defining conditions\*

|  |
|--|
| Candidiasis of bronchi, trachea or lungs   |
| Candidiasis, oesophageal   |
| Cervical carcinoma, invasive   |
| Coccidioidomycosis, disseminated or extrapulmonary   |
| Cryptococcosis, extrapulmonary   |
| Cryptosporidiosis, chronic intestinal (1 month duration)   |
| Cytomegalovirus (CMV) disease (other than liver, spleen or nodes)  |
| CMV retinitis (with loss of vision)  |
| Encephalopathy (HIV-related)   |
| Herpes simplex, chronic ulcers (1 month duration); or bronchitis, pneumonitis or oesophagitis            |
| Histoplasmosis, disseminated or extrapulmonary   |
| Isosporiasis; chronic intestinal (1 month duration)  |
| Kaposi's sarcoma   |
| Lymphoma, Burkitt's  |
| Lymphoma, immunoblastic (or equivalent term)   |
| Lymphoma (primary) of brain  |
| <i>Mycobacterium avium-intracellulare</i> complex or <i>M. kansasii</i> , disseminated or extrapulmonary |
| <i>Mycobacterium tuberculosis</i> , any site   |
| <i>Mycobacterium</i> , other species or unidentified species, disseminated or extrapulmonary             |
| <i>Pneumocystis jiroveci</i> (formerly <i>P. carinii</i> ) pneumonia                                     |
| Pneumonia, recurrent   |
| Progressive multifocal leucoencephalopathy   |
| <i>Salmonella</i> septicaemia, recurrent   |
| Toxoplasmosis of brain   |
| Wasting syndrome, due to HIV   |

\*USA definition also includes those with a CD4 count <200 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>

immunodeficiency (p. 49), co-infections, e.g. hepatitis B (p. 152) and side-effects of the drugs used to treat the condition.

## Diagnosis

Informed consent and testing for HIV infection should be within the competence of any doctor, nurse, midwife or trained healthcare worker. Recent UK national guidelines for HIV testing are intended to facilitate an increase in testing and prevent late diagnosis ([www.bhiva.org/cms1222621.asp](http://www.bhiva.org/cms1222621.asp)).

- Simple and rapid antibody assays are increasingly available giving results within minutes. Assays that can utilize alternative body fluids to serum/plasma such as oral fluid, whole blood and urine are now available and home testing kits are being developed. Antibodies may not be detectable for 6–12 weeks (depending on the assay) after infection (window period).

**Table 2.12** Direct human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection effects

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Neurological disease | AIDS dementia complex  |
|                      | Sensory polyneuropathy   |
|                      | Autonomic neuropathy causing diarrhoea and postural hypotension  |
|                      | Aseptic meningitis   |
| Eye                  | Retinal cotton wool spots – rarely troublesome   |
| Mucocutaneous        | Dry, itchy flaky skin  |
|                      | Pruritic papular eruption  |
|                      | Aphthous ulceration in the mouth   |
| Haematological       | Anaemia of chronic disease   |
|                      | Neutropenia  |
|                      | Autoimmune thrombocytopenia  |
| Gastrointestinal     | Anorexia leading to weight loss in advanced disease  |
|                      | HIV enteropathy leading to diarrhoea and malabsorption   |
| Renal                | Renal impairment   |
|                      | Nephrotic syndrome (due to focal glomerulosclerosis)   |
| Respiratory          | Chronic sinusitis and otitis media   |
|                      | Lymphoid interstitial pneumonitis – lymphocytic infiltration of the lung, causing dyspnoea and a dry cough |
| Endocrine            | Reduced adrenal function – infection may precipitate clear adrenal insufficiency                           |
| Cardiac              | Myocarditis and cardiomyopathy   |

- Viral p24 antigen (p24ag) is detectable in serum shortly after infection but 8–10 weeks after exposure.
- Viral genotype analysis is recommended for all newly diagnosed patients with HIV. Drug-resistant variants of HIV are increasing.

## Monitoring

Patients are regularly monitored to assess the progression of the infection and its treatment. Clinical examination will identify signs of immunosuppression, e.g. oral hairy leucoplakia.

- Following a diagnosis of HIV infection, the numbers of circulating CD4 lymphocytes are measured approximately 3 monthly; patients with counts below 200 cells are at greatest risk of HIV-related pathology (normal CD4 count in a healthy adult is >500). Rapidly falling CD4 counts and those below 350 are an indication for treatment with antiretroviral drugs.

- Plasma levels of HIV RNA ('viral load', measured in copies of RNA per mL) are a measure of viral replication. The viral load is the best indicator of long-term prognosis, e.g. 6 months after seroconversion to HIV patients with a viral load >100 000 copies/mL have a 10 times higher risk of progression to AIDS over the ensuing 5 years than those consistently below 10 000 copies/mL. HIV RNA levels fall with effective antiretroviral medication and a rising viral load, in a patient where compliance is assured, indicates drug failure.
- The diagnosis of AIDS is made when an HIV-positive patient develops one or more of a defined list of opportunistic infections, malignancies or HIV-associated illnesses (Table 2.10) in the absence of other causes of immunosuppression, e.g. leukaemia, immunosuppressive drugs.

## Management

Management involves treatment with antiretroviral drugs, social and psychological care, prevention of opportunistic infections and prevention of transmission of HIV. Although HIV infection cannot be cured, the advent of HAART has transformed HIV into a chronic controllable condition. The aims of treatment are to maintain physical and mental health, to avoid transmission of the virus, and to provide appropriate palliative support as needed. General health promotion advice on smoking cessation, alcohol, diet, drug misuse and exercise should be given, particularly in light of the cardiovascular, metabolic and hepatotoxic risks associated with HAART. Antiretroviral drugs and indications for starting treatment (UK) are listed in Tables 2.13 and 2.14 respectively.

Treatment regimens for HIV infection are complicated and require a long-term commitment to high levels of adherence. A combination of clinical assessment and laboratory marker data, including viral load and CD4 counts, together with individual circumstances, should guide therapeutic decision-making.

Treatment is initiated with a combination of drugs started simultaneously. The preferred starting regimen is two nucleoside/nucleotide reverse transcriptase inhibitors in combination with either a non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor or a protease inhibitor. The goal is to suppress the viral load to an undetectable level (<50 copies/mL) and thus secondarily halt the destruction of CD4 T lymphocytes within 3–6 months of starting therapy. Patients may need to change therapy because of drug resistance (indicated by a rise in viral load and falling CD4 count) or intolerance/adverse drug reactions.

## Conditions due to immunodeficiency

Immunodeficiency allows the development of opportunistic infections. These are diseases caused by organisms that are not usually considered pathogenic, or are unusual presentations of known pathogens, or the occurrence

**Table 2.13** Antiretroviral drugs

| Class of drug   | Mechanism of action   | Side-effects   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Reverse transcriptase inhibitors</b>   |   |  |
| 1. Nucleoside/nucleotide* reverse transcriptase inhibitors  |   |  |
| Abacavir<br>Didanosine<br>Emtricitabine<br>Lamivudine<br>Stavudine<br>Tenofovir*<br>Zidovudine  | Inhibit synthesis of DNA by reverse transcription and also act as DNA chain terminators                                     | Nausea, mitochondrial dysfunction and lactic acidosis,* polyneuropathy, pancreatitis (didanosine), myelosuppression (lamivudine, zidovudine), lipodystrophy† (stavudine, zidovudine) |
| 2. Non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors  |   |  |
| Efavirenz<br>Etravirine<br>Nevirapine   | Bind directly to, and inhibit reverse transcriptase   | Rash, toxic epidermal necrolysis, elevation of liver enzymes, central nervous system effects (dreams, hallucinations, depression) with efavirenz                                     |
| <b>Protease inhibitors</b>  |   |  |
| Atazanavir<br>Darunavir<br>Fosamprenavir<br>Indinavir<br>Lopinavir<br>Ritonavir<br>Saquinavir<br>Tipranavir                           | Act competitively on HIV aspartyl protease enzyme, which is involved in production of functional viral proteins and enzymes | Lipodystrophy, hyperlipidaemia, gastrointestinal intolerance, peri-oral paraesthesia (ritonavir), intracranial bleeding (tipranavir)   |
| <b>Fusion inhibitors</b>  |   |  |
| Enfuvirtide   | Inhibits fusion of HIV with target cell   | Reactions at s.c. injections sites   |
| Co-receptor blockers  |   |  |
| Maraviroc   | Blocks the CCR5 chemokine co-receptor   | Hepatotoxicity, pyrexia, rash, hypotension   |
| <b>Integrase inhibitors</b>   |   |  |
| Raltegravir   | Prevents insertion of HIV DNA into the human genome   | Gastrointestinal side-effects, headache, myopathy, rhabdomyolysis  |
| <i>All are given orally as capsules or tablets except enfuvirtide (s.c. injection)</i>  |   |  |
| <i>*Potentially fatal, stop treatment immediately, presents with fatigue, abdominal pain, nausea, hepatomegaly.</i>                   |   |  |
| <i>†Peripheral fat loss (face, limbs), central fat accumulation with a 'buffalo hump', hypertriglyceridaemia, insulin resistance.</i> |   |  |



**Table 2.14** UK recommendations for starting antiretroviral therapy

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Primary HIV infection   | Treatment in clinical trial                   |
|   | or if there is neurological involvement       |
|   | or if the CD4 <200 for 3/12                   |
|   | or if an AIDS-defining illness is present     |
| Established HIV infection   |   |
| CD4 <250  | Treat   |
| CD4 251–350   | Treat as soon as patient ready                |
| CD4 >350  | Consider enrolment into 'when to start' trial |
| AIDS diagnosis/category C   | Treat (except for tuberculosis when CD4 >350) |
| <i>Modified from Gazzard BG. British HIV Association guidelines for the treatment of HIV-1-infected adults with antiretroviral therapy 2008. HIV Medicine 2008; 9: 563–608. Available at: <a href="http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118491579/home">www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118491579/home</a>.</i> |   |

of tumours that have an oncogenic viral aetiology. Susceptibility increases as the patient becomes more immunosuppressed. When patients are profoundly immunocompromised (CD4 count <100 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>) disseminated infections with organisms of very low virulence such as *M. avium-intracellulare* and *Cryptosporidium* are able to establish themselves. The mortality and morbidity associated with HIV infection have declined dramatically since the introduction of HAART. Similarly, long-term secondary chemoprophylaxis for previously life-threatening infections may not be necessary when HAART maintains the CD4 count above 200 cells/mm<sup>3</sup> and the viral load is low.

## Fungi

*Pneumocystis jiroveci* (formerly *P. carinii*) causes pneumonia in severely immunocompromised patients (CD4 count <200). There is an insidious onset of breathlessness, a non-productive cough, fever and malaise. Pneumothorax may complicate *P. jiroveci* pneumonia (PCP). The chest X-ray may be normal or show bilateral perihilar interstitial infiltrates, which can progress to more diffuse shadowing. High-resolution CT scans of the chest are abnormal even if there is little on the chest X-ray. *Histoplasmosis* can produce a similar appearance. Definitive diagnosis is made by demonstrating the organisms (silver staining or immunofluorescent techniques) in samples obtained via bronchoscopy and bronchoalveolar lavage or by PCR amplification of the fungal DNA from a peripheral blood sample. Treatment is usually with intravenous co-trimoxazole, intravenous pentamidine or dapsone and trimethoprim for 21 days. Systemic corticosteroids reduce mortality in severe cases ( $P_{aO_2}$  <9.5 kPa). Long-term prophylaxis, usually with oral co-trimoxazole, is

required in patients whose CD4 count remains below 200 cells/mm<sup>3</sup> despite HAART.

*Cryptococcus neoformans* most commonly causes meningitis in AIDS patients. There is an insidious onset of fever, nausea and headache, eventually with impaired consciousness and change in affect. Diagnosis is made by CSF microscopy (Indian ink staining shows the organisms directly), demonstration of cryptococcal antigen, and culture of the organism from CSF and/or blood. CT scan is performed before lumbar puncture to exclude a space-occupying lesion. Treatment is with intravenous amphotericin B ± flucytosine or fluconazole. Oral fluconazole is continued long term unless the CD4 count is >100 for a 6-month period.

*Candida* infection (usually *Candida albicans*) presents as creamy plaques in the mouth, vulvovaginal region and oesophagus (producing odynophagia and dysphagia). Treatment is with fluconazole (preferred if *Candida* is disseminated) or itraconazole. Disseminated infection with *Aspergillus fumigatus* occurs in advanced HIV infection. Treatment is with amphotericin B, voriconazole or caspofungin. The prognosis is poor.

## Protozoal infections

*Toxoplasma gondii* most commonly causes encephalitis and cerebral abscess in AIDS patients. Clinical features include focal neurological signs, fits, fever, headache and possible confusion. Eye involvement with chorioretinitis may also be present. Diagnosis is made on the basis of positive *Toxoplasma* serology and multiple ring-enhancing lesions on contrast-enhanced CT or MRI of the brain. Treatment is with anticonvulsants and combination pyrimethamine, sulfadiazine and folinic acid (leucovorin) for at least 6 weeks. Lifelong maintenance is required to prevent relapse unless the CD4 count can be restored by HAART. The differential diagnosis of multiple ring-enhancing CNS lesions in these patients includes lymphoma, mycobacterial (e.g. tuberculoma) or focal cryptococcal infection.

*Cryptosporidium species* (*parvum* and *hominis*) cause a self-limiting watery diarrhoea and abdominal cramps in immunocompetent individuals and a severe chronic watery diarrhoea in HIV patients, in whom it also causes sclerosing cholangitis. Diagnosis is made by demonstrating cysts on stool microscopy or on small bowel biopsy specimens obtained at endoscopy. HAART and immune restoration is associated with resolution of symptoms. Treatment is otherwise symptomatic. Paromomycin and nitazoxanide have a limited effect on diarrhoea.

*Microsporidia* infection (*Enterocytozoon bienersi* and *Septata intestinalis*) cause diarrhoea. Diagnosis is made by demonstrating spores in the stools. Treatment is with HAART and albendazole.

*Leishmaniasis* occurs in HIV-infected individuals who have been in endemic areas (South America, tropical Africa, Mediterranean). Features are fever, malaise, diarrhoea, splenomegaly, anaemia and thrombocytopenia.

The diagnosis is made by demonstrating the organism in bone marrow biopsy or splenic aspirates. Treatment of choice is liposomal amphotericin.

## Viruses

**Cytomegalovirus** causes retinitis, colitis, oesophageal ulceration, encephalitis, pneumonitis, polyradiculopathy and adrenalitis. Retinitis presents with floaters, loss of visual acuity and orbital pain, usually in a patient with CD4 count <100. The diagnosis is made on fundoscopy, which shows a characteristic appearance of the retina with haemorrhages and exudate. Colitis presents with bloody diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Diagnosis is made by demonstrating characteristic 'cytomegalic cells' (large cells containing an intranuclear inclusion and sometimes intracytoplasmic inclusions) on light-microscopic examination of mucosal biopsy specimens. Treatment of CMV infection is with intravenous ganciclovir or foscarnet. Reactivation occurs in CMV retinitis and oral or topical ganciclovir is given long term, unless immune competence can be restored with HAART.

**Herpes virus** Primary infection with herpes simplex virus causes genital and oral ulceration, and systemic infection. Varicella zoster occurs at any stage of HIV infection, but may be more aggressive and longer lasting than in immunocompetent patients. Treatment is with aciclovir. Human herpesvirus 8 is associated with Kaposi's sarcoma (see below). EBV causes oral hairy leucoplakia, presenting as a pale, ridged lesion on the side of the tongue. EBV is also associated with primary cerebral lymphoma and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (see below).

**Human papilloma virus (HPV)** produces genital and plantar warts. HPV infection is associated with the more rapid development of squamous cell cancer of the cervix and anal cancer.

**Papovavirus** causes progressive multifocal leucoencephalopathy, which presents with intellectual impairment and often hemiparesis and aphasia.

**Hepatitis virus B and C** Because of the comparable routes of transmission of hepatitis viruses and HIV, co-infection is common, particularly in drug users and those infected by blood products. Hepatitis B does not seem to influence the natural history of HIV, though there is a reduced rate of clearance of the hepatitis B e antigen in co-infected patients and thus the risk of developing chronic infection is increased. Hepatitis C, on the other hand, is associated with a more rapid progression of HIV infection, and the progression of hepatitis C is more likely and more rapid.

## Bacterial infection

This may present early in HIV infection, is often disseminated and frequently recurs. *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* can cause disease at all stages of HIV infection, but extrapulmonary tuberculosis (TB) is more common with advanced disease. *M. tuberculosis* infection usually responds well to standard

treatment regimens, although the duration of therapy may be extended, especially in extrapulmonary infection. Treatment of TB in HIV co-infected patients presents specific challenges, particularly with regard to drug interactions and multidrug resistance (p. 544), and requires input from a specialist physician.

*Mycobacterium avium-intracellulare* (MAI) occurs only in the later stages of HIV infection when patients are profoundly immunosuppressed (CD4 cell count  $<50$  /mm<sup>3</sup>). Clinical features include fever, anorexia, weight loss, diarrhoea and anaemia with bone marrow involvement. MAI is typically resistant to standard anti-tuberculous therapies. A combination of ethambutol, rifabutin and clarithromycin reduces the burden of organisms and provides symptomatic benefit. Other infections include *Strep. pneumoniae*, *H. influenzae*, staphylococcal skin infection and salmonella.

## Neoplasia

The commonest tumours are Kaposi's sarcoma and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The incidence of all HIV-related malignancies has fallen dramatically since the introduction of HAART.

- Kaposi's sarcoma is a vascular tumour that appears as red-purple, raised, well-circumscribed lesions on the skin, hard palate and conjunctivae, and in the gastrointestinal tract. The lungs and lymph nodes may also be involved. Human herpesvirus 8 is implicated in the pathogenesis. Localized disease is treated with radiotherapy; systemic disease is treated with chemotherapy. Initiation of HAART may cause regression of lesions and prevent new ones emerging.
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma occurs in the brain, gut and lung.
- Squamous cell carcinoma of the cervix and anus is associated with HIV. HPV may play a part in the pathogenesis.

## Prevention and control

- The risk of HIV transmission following a needle-stick injury involving contaminated blood is reduced by about 80% with post-exposure prophylaxis using a combination of zidovudine, lamivudine and indinavir for 4 weeks. Prophylaxis should be started as soon as possible after exposure.
- Pregnant HIV-positive women should receive antiviral therapy to reduce the risk of vertical transmission. Delivery by caesarean section and the avoidance of breast-feeding dramatically reduces infection for patients not adequately treated with HAART, but access to these interventions is limited in resource-poor countries.
- The use of condoms reduces sexual transmission of HIV. Male circumcision protects those individuals against infection with HIV and also other sexually transmitted diseases, such as syphilis and gonorrhoea.

- Advise drug addicts not to share needles; some areas provide free sterile needles.

## Prognosis

The rate of progression among patients infected with HIV varies greatly. The average life expectancy for an HIV-infected patient in the absence of treatment is approximately 10 years. The mean survival following a CD4 count of 200 cells/ $\mu$ L is about 3 years. The introduction of HAART has resulted in a dramatic decrease in mortality and opportunistic infections in patients with HIV.

## THERAPEUTICS

Antimicrobial agents are natural or synthetic chemical substances that suppress the growth of, or destroy, microorganisms including bacteria, fungi and viruses. Antimicrobial treatment must be started immediately in patients with life-threatening infection and 'blind therapy' based on the likely causative organisms. Treatment can be adjusted later based on antimicrobial susceptibility data from specimens, e.g. pus, blood, foreign bodies, sent before or coinciding with start of treatment. Treatment should be prescribed for the shortest course likely to be effective and agents selected to minimize collateral damage, e.g. hospital-wide policies to restrict use of broad-spectrum antibiotics such as some cephalosporins in favour of narrow-spectrum antibiotics such as benzylpenicillin, have achieved significant reduction in *C. difficile* infections. Antimicrobials should always be prescribed in accordance with local policies and guidelines.

## Antibacterials

The choice of antibacterial is based on patient factors and the known or likely causative organism. Factors related to the patient which must be considered include history of drug allergy (e.g. penicillin), renal and hepatic function, susceptibility to infection (e.g. immunosuppressed), severity of illness, age, ability to take drugs by mouth, and in women use of the contraceptive pill, pregnancy or breast-feeding. Antibacterials can be either bacteriostatic (inhibit bacterial growth but do not destroy it, infection is eliminated by the native immune system) or bactericidal (kill the microorganism). Antibacterials are also grouped according to their mechanism of action.

### $\beta$ -Lactam antibacterials

#### Mechanism of action

The Inhibit synthesis of the peptidoglycan layer of the cell wall, which surrounds certain bacteria and is essential for their survival.

## Indications

*Benzylpenicillin* (penicillin G) is effective for many streptococcal and meningococcal infections, leptospirosis and treatment of Lyme disease. *Phenoxymethylpenicillin* (penicillin V) has a similar antibacterial spectrum to benzyl-penicillin but it should not be used for serious infections because gut absorption is unpredictable. *Flucloxacillin* is effective for infections due to  $\beta$ -lactamase-producing staphylococci (most staphylococci are resistant to benzyl-penicillin because they produce penicillinases). *Ampicillin* is principally indicated for the treatment of exacerbations of chronic bronchitis and middle ear infections. *Amoxicillin* is a derivative of ampicillin and has a similar antibacterial spectrum. It is better absorbed than ampicillin when given by mouth. *Co-amoxiclav* consists of amoxicillin with the  $\beta$ -lactamase inhibitor clavulanic acid, which extends the spectrum of activity of amoxicillin. *Piperacillin* is an extended spectrum  $\beta$ -lactam antibiotic. It is usually used together with a  $\beta$ -lactamase inhibitor such as tazobactam. The combination has activity against many Gram-positive and Gram-negative pathogens and anaerobes including *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.

## Preparations and dose

### Benzylpenicillin

*Injection: 600 mg vial.*

**IM/IV** (slow injection or infusion): 2.4–4.8 g daily in four divided doses. Higher doses may be needed in serious infections.

### Phenoxymethylpenicillin

*Tablets: 250 mg; Solution: 125 mg/5 mL, 250 mg/mL.*

**Oral** 500 mg every 6 hours increased up to 1 g every 6 hours in severe infections.

### Flucloxacillin

*Capsules: 250 mg, 500 mg; Solution: 125 mg/5 mL, 250 mg/5 mL; Injection: 250 mg vial.*

**Oral** 250–500 mg every 6 hours, at least 30 minutes before food.

**IM** 250–500 mg every 6 hours.

**IV** (slow injection or infusion): 0.25–2 g every 6 hours.

### Amoxicillin

*Capsules: 250 mg, 500 mg; Suspension: 125 mg/5 mL, 250 mg/5 mL; Injection: 250 mg vial.*

**Oral** 250–500 mg depending on infection.

**IM/IV** (slow injection or infusion): 500 mg every 8 hours increased to 1 g every 6 hours in severe infections.

## Ampicillin

*Capsules: 250 mg, 500 mg; Suspension: 125 mg/5 mL, 250 mg/5 mL; Injection: 500 mg vial.*

**Oral** 0.25–1 g every 6 hours 30 minutes before food.

**IM/IV** (slow injection or infusion): 500 mg every 4–6 hours increased to 2 g every 6 hours in endocarditis and 2 g every 4 hours in *Listeria* meningitis.

## Piperacillin + tazobactam

*Injection 2.25 g (2 g/250 mg) or 4.5 g (4 g/500 mg) vial.*

**IV** (slow injection or infusion): 4.5 g every 8 hours increased to every 6 hours with an aminoglycoside in neutropenia.

## Side-effects

Hypersensitivity reactions include urticaria, fever, rashes, and anaphylaxis. Individuals with a history of anaphylaxis, urticaria or rash immediately after penicillin administration are at risk of immediate hypersensitivity to a penicillin and should not receive a penicillin or cephalosporin (10% of penicillin-allergic patients are also allergic to cephalosporins). Encephalopathy with fits results from excessively high doses or in patients with severe renal failure. Diarrhoea and *C. difficile* infection (p. 34) can occur as a result of disturbance of the normal colonic flora. Other effects are interstitial nephritis, hepatitis, cholestatic jaundice, reversible neutropenia and eosinophilia. Aminopenicillins (e.g. amoxicillin) frequently produce a non-allergic maculopapular rash in patients with glandular fever.

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in penicillin hypersensitivity (see above); macrolides are an alternative in these patients.

## Cephalosporins

### Mechanism of action

Inhibit bacterial wall synthesis in a manner similar to the penicillins.

## Indications

Broad-spectrum antibiotics – used for treatment of septicaemia, pneumonia, meningitis, biliary tract infections, peritonitis and urinary tract infections.

## Preparations and dose

Cephalosporins are often classified by ‘generations’. The members within each generation share similar antibacterial activity. Succeeding generations tend to have increased activity against Gram-negative bacilli, usually at the

expense of Gram-positive activity, and increased ability to cross the blood–brain barrier.

## First-generation

### Cefalexin

*Capsules: 250 mg, 500 mg; Suspension: 125 mg/5 mL, 250 mg/5 mL.*

**Oral** 250 mg every 8 hours, doubled for severe infections; maximum 4 g daily.

## Second generation

### Cefaclor

*Capsules: 250 mg, 500 mg; Suspension: 125 mg/5 mL, 250 mg/5 mL.*

**Oral** 250 mg every 8 hours, doubled for severe infections; maximum 4 g daily.

### Cefuroxime

*Tablets: 125 mg, 250 mg; Suspension: 125 mg/mL; Injection: 250 mg, 750 mg, 1.5 g vial.*

**Oral** 250 mg twice daily in most infections; double dose for pneumonia. Gonorrhoea: 1 g as a single dose; Lyme disease: 500 mg twice daily for 20 days.

**IM/IV** 750 mg every 6–8 hours; 1.5 g every 6–8 hours in severe infections. Single injected doses over 750 mg by intravenous route only.

## Third generation

### Cefotaxime

*Injection: 500 mg, 1 g, 2 g.*

**IM/IV** (injection or infusion): 1 g every 12 hours increased in severe infections (e.g. meningitis) to 8 g daily in four divided doses.

### Ceftazidime

*Injection: 250 mg, 500 mg, 1 g, 2 g.*

**IM/IV** (injection or infusion): 1 g every 8 hours or 2 g every 12 hours; 2 g every 8 hours or 3 g every 12 hours in severe infections. Single doses over 1 g by intravenous route only.

## Side-effects

Skin rashes, nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea (including *C. difficile* colitis), hypersensitivity reactions (see penicillin).

## Cautions/contraindications

Penicillin hypersensitivity other than with a minor rash only.



## Aminoglycosides

### Mechanism of action

Inhibit protein synthesis in bacteria by binding irreversibly to the 30S ribosomal unit. This inhibits translation from mRNA to protein. Aminoglycosides are bactericidal.

### Indications

Active against many Gram-negative bacteria (including *Pseudomonas* species) and some Gram-positive bacteria but are inactive against anaerobes. Often used for serious Gram-negative infections when they have a complementary and synergistic action with agents that disrupt cell wall synthesis (e.g. penicillins).

### Preparations and dose

Examples: gentamicin (the most widely used), amikacin, neomycin, netilmicin, streptomycin, tobramycin.

### Gentamicin

*Injection: 40 mg/mL*

**IM/IV** (slow injection over 3 min or infusion): 3–5 mg/kg in divided doses every 8 hours or once daily by intravenous infusion, 5–7 mg/kg, then adjust according to serum gentamicin concentration.

### Side-effects

Most unwanted effects are dose related and are probably related to high trough concentrations of the drug. Ototoxicity can lead to both vestibular and auditory dysfunction, which result in often irreversible disturbances of balance or deafness. Other side-effects are renal toxicity, acute neuromuscular blockade, nausea, vomiting, rash and antibiotic-associated colitis.

### Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in myasthenia gravis. Monitor serum concentrations in all patients and reduce dose in renal impairment. In patients with normal renal function, serum aminoglycoside concentrations should be measured after three to four doses (earlier and more frequent measurements in patients with renal failure), 1 hour after i.m. or i.v. administration ('peak' concentration to ensure bactericidal efficacy) and also just before the next dose ('trough' concentration to minimize the risk of toxic effects). For once-daily dose regimen consult local guidelines on monitoring.

## Macrolides

### Mechanism of action

Interfere with bacterial protein synthesis by binding reversibly to the 50S subunit of the bacterial ribosome. The action is primarily bacteriostatic unless at high concentrations.

### Indications

Erythromycin has an antibacterial spectrum that is similar to that of penicillin; it is thus an alternative in penicillin-allergic patients. Indications for erythromycin include respiratory infections, whooping cough, legionnaires' disease, *Chlamydia* infections and *Campylobacter* enteritis. Erythromycin has poor activity against *H. influenzae*. Clarithromycin is a derivative of erythromycin with slightly greater activity. Azithromycin has slightly less activity than erythromycin against Gram-positive bacteria but enhanced activity against Gram-negative bacteria.

### Preparations and dose

Examples: erythromycin, azithromycin, clarithromycin.

#### Erythromycin

*Capsules and tablets: 250 mg; Suspension: 125 mg/5 mL, 250 mg/5 mL, 500 mg/5 mL; Injection: 1 g vial.*

**Oral** 0.5–1 g daily in two or four divided doses; up to 4 g daily in severe infections. Early syphilis: 500 mg four times daily for 14 days. Uncomplicated genital chlamydia and non-gonococcal urethritis: 500 mg twice daily for 14 days.

**IV infusion** 25 mg/kg by continuous infusion or in divided doses every 6 hours; 50 mg/kg in severe infections.

#### Clarithromycin

*Tablets: 250 mg, 500 mg; Injection: 500 mg vial.*

**Oral** 250 mg every 12 hours; increased in severe infections to 500 mg every 12 hours.

**IV infusion** into larger proximal vein: 500 mg twice daily.

### Side-effects

Gastrointestinal upsets (epigastric discomfort, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea) are common with the oral preparation of erythromycin; azithromycin and clarithromycin are better tolerated. Skin rashes, cholestatic jaundice (with erythromycin), prolongation of the QT interval on the electrocardiogram (ECG), with a predisposition to ventricular arrhythmias. Erythromycin and clarithromycin inhibit P450 drug-metabolizing enzymes and can elevate

levels of drugs (e.g. carbamazepine and ciclosporin) requiring these enzymes for metabolism (see national formulary for list).

## Sulphonamides and trimethoprim

### Mechanism of action

Inhibit the enzyme dihydrofolate reductase in the synthetic pathway to folic acid. Bacteria cannot utilize external folic acid, a nutrient that is essential for cell growth.

### Indications

The importance of the sulphonamides has decreased as a result of increasing bacterial resistance and their replacement by antibacterials that are generally more active and less toxic. Sulfamethoxazole and trimethoprim are used in combination (as co-trimoxazole) because of their synergistic activity. However, co-trimoxazole is associated with rare but serious side-effects (e.g. Stevens–Johnson syndrome, bone marrow suppression) and its use is limited to the treatment of PCP, toxoplasmosis and nocardiosis. In other infections it is only used when there is evidence of sensitivity and good reason to prefer this combination to a single drug. Trimethoprim is used in urinary tract infections and acute and chronic bronchitis.

### Trimethoprim

*Tablets: 100 mg, 200 mg; Suspension: 50 mg/5 mL.*

**Oral** 200 mg every 12 hours.

### Side-effects

Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, skin rashes. Rarely bone marrow suppression, folate deficiency (in patients with depleted folate stores), photosensitivity and allergic reactions including anaphylaxis.

### Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in blood dyscrasias.

## Metronidazole and tinidazole

### Mechanism of action

A toxic metabolite inhibits bacterial DNA synthesis and breaks down existing DNA. Only some anaerobes and some protozoa contain the enzyme (nitroreductase) that converts metronidazole to its toxic metabolite. It is bactericidal.

### Indications

Anaerobic infections, protozoal infections, *Helicobacter pylori* eradication, *C. difficile* colitis. Metronidazole is more commonly used than tinidazole.

## Preparations and dose

### Metronidazole

*Tablets: 200 mg, 400 mg; Suspension: 200 mg/5 mL; Intravenous infusion: 5 g/5 mL; Flagyl® suppositories.*

**Oral** 400 mg every 8 hours; for surgical prophylaxis, 400 mg before surgery and three further doses of 400 mg every 8 hours for high-risk procedures.

**IV infusion** over 20 minutes: 500 mg every 8 hours; for surgical prophylaxis, 500 mg at induction and up to three further doses of 500 mg every 8 hours for high-risk procedures.

**By rectum** 500 mg every 8 hours; for surgical prophylaxis, 1 g 2 hours before surgery and up to three further doses of 1 g every 8 hours for high-risk procedures.

### Side-effects

Nausea, vomiting, metallic taste, disulfiram-like reaction (unpleasant hang-over symptoms) with alcohol, skin rashes, and abnormal liver biochemistry. With prolonged therapy, peripheral neuropathy, transient epileptiform seizures and leucopenia can occur.

### Cautions/contraindications

Caution with alcohol ingestion; reduce dose in severe liver disease and avoid in porphyria.

### Quinolones

#### Mechanism of action

Inhibit replication of bacterial DNA. The effect is bactericidal.

### Indications

Ciprofloxacin has a broad spectrum of activity and is particularly active against Gram-negative bacteria. It has only weak activity against streptococci, staphylococci and anaerobes.

## Preparations and dose

Examples: ciprofloxacin, norfloxacin, levofloxacin.

### Ciprofloxacin

*Tablets: 100 mg, 250 mg, 500 mg, 750 mg; Suspension: 250 mg/5 mL; Intravenous infusion: 2 mg/mL.*

**Oral** 250–750 mg twice daily depending on infection.

**IV infusion** (over 30–60 minutes): 200–400 mg twice daily.

## Side-effects

Gastrointestinal upset (nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea), CNS effects (dizziness, headache, tremors, rarely convulsions), photosensitive skin rashes, tendon damage (pain, inflammation, rupture).

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in patients with a history of tendon disorders related to quinolone use; risk of tendon rupture is increased by corticosteroids. If tendonitis is suspected, stop quinolone immediately.

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# Gastroenterology and nutrition

## GASTROENTEROLOGY

Gastrointestinal symptoms are a common reason for attendance in primary care and hospital clinics. In developed countries they are often a manifestation of functional bowel diseases. In developing countries infection is a more common diagnosis.

## SYMPTOMS OF GASTROINTESTINAL DISEASE

### Dyspepsia and indigestion

Dyspepsia is a common complaint and describes a range of symptoms referable to the upper gastrointestinal tract, e.g. epigastric pain or burning, nausea, heartburn, fullness and belching. Patients are more likely to use the term 'indigestion' for these symptoms. Dyspeptic symptoms are caused by disorders of the oesophagus, stomach, pancreas or hepatobiliary system but the most common cause is functional dyspepsia (p. 117). Other causes include peptic ulceration, gastro-oesophageal reflux disease or rarely a gastro-oesophageal cancer. Investigation and management of dyspepsia is discussed on page 84.

### Dysphagia

Dysphagia is difficulty in swallowing and suggests an abnormality in the passage of liquids or solids from the oral cavity through the oesophagus and into the stomach. The causes are listed in Table 3.1 and investigation discussed on page 73.

### Vomiting

Vomiting occurs as a result of stimulation of the vomiting centres in the lateral reticular formation of the medulla. This may result from stimulation of the chemoreceptor trigger zones in the floor of the fourth ventricle or from vagal

**Table 3.1** Causes of dysphagia

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| <b>Disorders of the mouth and tongue</b> | <b>Extrinsic pressure</b> |
| E.g. tonsillitis                         | Mediastinal glands        |
| <b>Neuromuscular disorders</b>           | Goitre                    |
| Pharyngeal disorders                     | Enlarged left atrium      |
| Bulbar palsy                             |                           |
| Myasthenia gravis                        | <b>Intrinsic lesion</b>   |
|  | Benign stricture          |
| <b>Oesophageal motility disorders</b>    | Malignant stricture       |
| Primary oesophageal disease              | Oesophageal web or ring   |
| Achalasia                                | Foreign body              |
| Other oesophageal dysmotility            | Pharyngeal pouch          |
| Eosinophilic oesophagitis*               |                           |
| Systemic disease                         |                           |
| Diabetes mellitus                        |                           |
| Chagas' disease                          |                           |
| Scleroderma                              |                           |

*\*Increasingly apparent cause of dysphagia (? due to discoordination of longitudinal muscle of the oesophagus), characterized by eosinophil infiltration of the oesophagus and diagnosed on mucosal biopsies.*

afferents from the gut. Vomiting is associated with many gastrointestinal conditions, but nausea and vomiting without abdominal pain are frequently non-gastrointestinal in origin, e.g. due to central nervous system (CNS) disease (e.g. raised intracranial pressure, migraine), excess alcohol, drugs (especially chemotherapeutic agents), metabolic conditions (e.g. uraemia, diabetic ketoacidosis) and pregnancy. Persistent nausea and vomiting without any other symptoms is often functional in origin (p. 117).

## Flatulence

Flatulence describes excessive wind, presenting as belching, abdominal distension and the passage of flatus per rectum. It is rarely indicative of serious underlying disease.

## Diarrhoea and constipation

These are common complaints and not usually due to serious disease. Diarrhoea implies the passage of increased amounts of loose stool (stool weight >250 g/24 h) (p. 114). This must be differentiated from the frequent passage of small amounts of stool (that patients often refer to as diarrhoea),



which is commonly seen in functional bowel disorders. Investigation and management are discussed on page 114. Constipation is difficult to define because there is considerable individual variation, but it is usually taken to mean infrequent passage of stool (< twice weekly) or the difficult passage of hard stools.

## Steatorrhoea

Steatorrhoea is the passage of pale bulky stools that contain fat (>17 mmol or 6 g per day) and indicates fat malabsorption as a result of small bowel, pancreatic disease (resulting in lipase deficiency), or cholestatic liver/biliary disease (resulting in intestinal bile salt deficiency). The stools are offensive, often float because of increased air content and are difficult to flush away.

## Abdominal pain

Table 3.2 lists the common causes of abdominal pain based on the usual site of pain. Abdominal pain presenting as an acute abdomen is also discussed on page 118.

## INVESTIGATION OF GASTROINTESTINAL DISEASE

Other than blood tests, which will often include coeliac serology, endoscopy and radiological imaging are the common investigations in patients with gastrointestinal complaints. Faecal markers of intestinal inflammation and tissue damage, e.g. faecal calprotectin, are used in some centres. They are able to distinguish organic from non-inflammatory functional disease with high diagnostic accuracy.

## Endoscopy

Gastrointestinal endoscopy is usually performed as an outpatient procedure. These investigations require written informed consent. Mucosal biopsy is often an integral part of the examination; multiple biopsies (8–10) are taken in suspected cancer to reduce sampling error and a false-negative result.

### Oesophagogastroduodenoscopy (OGD, 'gastroscopy')

A flexible endoscope is passed through the mouth into the oesophagus, stomach and duodenum following the administration of local anaesthetic spray to the pharynx and/or light sedation with intravenous midazolam. Patients fast for 6 hours prior to the procedure and must not drive for 24 hours after intravenous sedation. OGD is used in the investigation of dyspepsia, dysphagia, weight loss and iron deficiency anaemia. Duodenal biopsies can be obtained to establish a diagnosis of coeliac disease, and therapeutic options include arresting upper gastrointestinal bleeding, dilatation of

**Table 3.2** Causes of abdominal pain by location

| Epigastric                         | Lower abdomen                                    |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Peptic ulceration                  | Functional pain                                  |
| Functional dyspepsia               | Diverticulitis                                   |
| Gastric cancer                     | Appendicitis                                     |
| Pancreatitis                       | Gynaecological: salpingitis, ovarian cyst/cancer |
| Pancreatic cancer                  | Ectopic pregnancy                                |
|                                    | Renal or urinary tract (p. 356)                  |
| Upper abdomen                      | Inflammatory bowel disease                       |
| Hepatitis                          |  |
| Hepatic congestion                 | Diffuse or varied site                           |
| Pancreatitis                       | Gastroenteritis                                  |
| Biliary pain                       | Mesenteric ischaemia                             |
| Subdiaphragmatic abscess           | Bowel obstruction                                |
| Functional pain                    | Peritonitis                                      |
| Splenic abscess or infarct         | Ruptured aortic aneurysm                         |
| Cardiac (myocarditis, ischaemia)   | Metabolic (DKA, porphyria)                       |
| Pneumonia                          | Familial Mediterranean fever                     |
|                                    | Herpes zoster (pain precedes the rash)           |
| <i>DKA, diabetic ketoacidosis.</i> |  |

oesophageal strictures, and stent insertion for palliation of oesophageal malignancy.

### Sigmoidoscopy

This is performed with a rigid instrument to examine the rectum and distal sigmoid, or with a flexible instrument to examine the whole of the left colon. Bowel preparation is achieved with one or two phosphate enemas, and sedation is rarely required.

### Colonoscopy

This allows visualization of the entire colon and terminal ileum. Bowel cleansing solutions (p. 132) are given in advance of the procedure to clear the bowel of solid contents. Intravenous analgesia (with pethidine) and sedation (with midazolam) is usually required. Colonoscopy is useful for the investigation of patients with altered bowel habit, rectal bleeding, or as a screening tool for colorectal cancer. Therapeutic options include removal of polyps (polypectomy) or diathermy of bleeding lesions such as angiodysplasia. Complications

of colonoscopy ( $\pm$  polypectomy) are bowel perforation and bleeding, and respiratory depression and hypotension as a result of the sedation.

## Small bowel examination

The length of the small intestine (6–7 m) limits passage of standard endoscopes due to looping and patient discomfort.

- *Enteroscopy* allows endoscopic visualization to about 80–100 cm beyond the duodenum. The whole of the small bowel can be visualized with *balloon-assisted enteroscopy* but this technique is limited to a few specialized centres.
- *Video (wireless) capsule endoscopy* is a non-invasive technique to image the small intestine. After an overnight fast the capsule is swallowed and images are recorded by sensors and a recorder worn on an abdominal belt.

These techniques are used in the investigation of suspected small bowel disease, e.g. obscure gastrointestinal bleeding, Crohn's disease and tumours.

## Imaging

**Plain X-rays** of the chest and abdomen are used in the investigation of the acute abdomen. They may show free gas with a perforated viscus, dilated loops of bowel with intestinal obstruction and colonic dilatation in a patient with severe ulcerative colitis (UC). Calcification in the pancreas (just to the left of L1) indicates chronic pancreatitis, and faecal loading is seen with constipation.

## Ultrasound

**Transabdominal ultrasound** is useful for visualization of the liver, gall bladder and biliary tree, and kidneys. It is commonly used for investigation of abnormal liver blood tests, hepatomegaly and for characterization of abdominal masses. It is also used for the detection of bowel wall thickening and for determining the extent of involved segments in Crohn's disease, but is not disease specific. It is used to guide needle placement for biopsies of the liver and solid mass lesions, and for drainage of ascites and inflammatory collections.

**Endoscopic ultrasound (EUS)** combines endoscopy with an ultrasound probe at the scope tip.

It is used to visualize the walls of the upper and lower gastrointestinal tract and nearby organs such as the pancreas and gall bladder. It is used for tumour and nodal staging of oesophageal, gastric or pancreatic cancer or for non-invasive imaging of the bile ducts (with suspected stones) and pancreas.

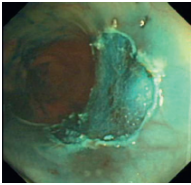
**Endoanal and endorectal ultrasonography** involves the passage of an ultrasound transducer into the rectum. It is used to assess the anal sphincters, particularly in patients with faecal incontinence and to stage rectal cancers.

### Computed tomography (CT) scan

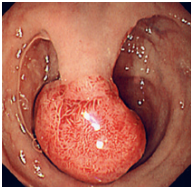
CT scanning (p. 822) is frequently used in the investigation of gastrointestinal disease, particularly in the staging of intra-abdominal malignancy and in the investigation and assessment of the acute abdomen (demonstrating perforated viscus, inflammation, e.g. appendicitis, the site and cause of intestinal obstruction and renal calculi). CT colonography/CT pneumocolon (virtual colonoscopy) provides a computer-simulated intraluminal view of the air-filled colon. Like conventional colonoscopy it requires full bowel preparation (p. 132) and air distension of the colon. The images obtained can visualize colonic polyps (Fig. 3.1) and cancer, but biopsies cannot be taken or polyps removed. It is mainly used where conventional colonoscopy cannot be performed because of patient intolerance or technical difficulties. Unprepared abdominal and pelvic CT scanning is a good test for colon cancer in the frail or elderly patient who may not tolerate the necessary bowel preparation for conventional or CT colonography.



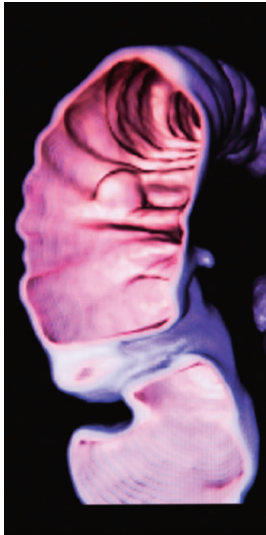
(Ai)



(Aii)



(Aiii)



(B)

**Fig. 3.1** Colon polyps seen at (Ai–iii) colonoscopy and (B) computed tomography (CT) colonography. Aii is after endoscopic resection of the polyps in Ai.

Risks associated with CT scanning are allergy to intravenous contrast and exposure to radiation. The effective radiation dose from abdominal and pelvic CT scan or CT colonography is 10 mSv and equivalent to about 3 years' natural background radiation. Multiple CT scans in an individual may increase cancer risk as a result of radiation exposure.

### Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)

MRI (p. 826) is particularly used to image the pelvis (assessment of perianal Crohn's disease and staging of rectal cancer) and in the assessment of small bowel, pancreatic and hepatobiliary disease (MR cholangiopancreatography).

### Positron emission tomography (PET) scanning

PET scanning (p. 828) is used with other imaging modalities such as CT scan in the investigation of suspected malignancy and for detection of metastases in known malignancy.

### Contrast studies

Ingestion of barium followed by X-rays allows examination of the oesophagus (barium swallow), stomach and duodenum (barium meal) and small intestine (barium follow-through). These techniques are less sensitive than endoscopy particularly for small mucosal lesions. However, unlike endoscopy, barium swallow will demonstrate motility problems in the investigation of dysphagia. Barium enema examines the colon by insufflation of barium and air per rectum after full bowel preparation (p. 132). Colonoscopy is usually the preferred method to examine the colon.

### Oesophageal physiology testing

Insertion of probes into the lower oesophagus via the nose allows continual measurement over 24 hours of acid (pH monitoring) and volume (by impedance testing) reflux of gastric contents. Data are captured on a small device worn on a belt, and transferred to a computer at the end of the 24-hour period. These methods record the frequency and duration of reflux episodes and correlation with symptoms. They are performed prior to surgical treatment of reflux or in difficult diagnostic cases.

Oesophageal manometry involves the passage of a small tube containing several pressure transducers into the oesophagus via the nose. Oesophageal peristalsis and pressure are assessed on swallowing. Manometry is used in the investigation of suspected oesophageal motility disorders in patients with dysphagia (p. 73).

## THE MOUTH

Problems in the mouth are common and often trivial, although they can cause severe symptoms.

## Mouth ulcers

### Non-infective

- Recurrent aphthous ulceration is the most common cause of mouth ulcers and affects at least 20% of the population; in most cases the aetiology is unknown. There are recurrent self-limiting episodes of painful oral ulcers (rarely on the palate). Topical corticosteroids are used for symptomatic relief but they have no effect on the natural history. In a few cases ulcers are associated with trauma or gastrointestinal and systemic diseases, e.g. anaemia, inflammatory bowel disease, coeliac disease, Behçet's disease, Reiter's disease, systemic lupus erythematosus, pemphigus, pemphigoid and fixed drug reactions.
- Squamous cell carcinoma presents as an indolent ulcer, usually on the lateral borders of the tongue or floor of the mouth. Aetiological factors include tobacco (smoking and chewing) and alcohol. Treatment is with surgery, radiotherapy or a combination of both.

### Infective

Many infections can affect the mouth, though the most common are viral and include:

- Herpes simplex virus type 1
- Coxsackie A virus
- Herpes zoster virus.

## Oral white patches

Oral white patches are associated with smoking, *Candida* infection, lichen planus, trauma and syphilis. Leucoplakia is the term used to describe oral white patches or plaques for which no local cause can be found (i.e. a diagnosis of exclusion). Leucoplakia is occasionally a premalignant lesion and thus oral white patches must be biopsied to exclude malignancy. Hairy leucoplakia is an Epstein–Barr-related white patch on the side of the tongue, which is almost pathognomonic of HIV infection; it is not premalignant.

## Atrophic glossitis

A smooth, sore tongue with loss of filiform papillae may occur in patients with iron, vitamin B<sub>12</sub> or folate deficiency.

## Geographical tongue

This affects 1–2% of the population and describes discrete areas of depapillation on the dorsum of the tongue. This may be asymptomatic or produce a sore tongue. The aetiology is unknown and there is no specific treatment.

## Periodontal disorders

Gum bleeding is most commonly caused by gingivitis, an inflammatory condition of the gums associated with dental plaque. Bleeding may also be associated with generalized conditions such as bleeding disorders and leukaemia. Acute ulcerative gingivitis (Vincent's infection) is characterized by the development of crater-like ulcers, with bleeding, involving the interdental papillae, followed by lateral spread along the gingival margins. It is thought to be the result of spirochaetal infection occurring in the malnourished and immunocompromised. Treatment is with oral metronidazole and good oral hygiene.

## Salivary gland disorders

Xerostomia (mouth dryness) may be caused by anxiety, drugs such as tricyclic antidepressants, Sjögren's syndrome and dehydration. Infection (parotitis) may be viral, i.e. mumps virus, or bacterial (staphylococci or streptococci). Calculus formation usually occurs in the duct of the submandibular gland, and causes painful swelling of the gland before or during mastication. Among the salivary glands, tumours most commonly develop in the parotid gland and are usually benign, e.g. pleomorphic adenoma. Treatment is with surgical resection. Involvement of the VIIth cranial nerve raises the suspicion of malignancy.

## THE OESOPHAGUS

Oesophageal symptoms are dysphagia, heartburn, regurgitation and painful swallowing:

- Dysphagia (difficulty in swallowing) has mechanical and neuromuscular causes (Table 3.1). A short history of progressive dysphagia initially for solids and then liquids is suggestive of a mechanical stricture. Investigation is with urgent OGD (p. 67) particularly to look for a malignant oesophageal stricture. A barium swallow is more appropriate as the first-line investigation when the history (slow onset of dysphagia for both solids and liquids) suggests a motility disorder such as achalasia. Oesophageal manometry may subsequently be necessary.
- Heartburn is a retrosternal or epigastric burning sensation produced by the reflux of gastric acid into the oesophagus. The pain may radiate up to the throat and be confused with chest pain of cardiac origin (p. 408). It is often aggravated by bending or lying down and relieved by antacids.
- Regurgitation is the effortless reflux of oesophageal contents into the mouth and pharynx. It occurs in reflux disease and oesophageal strictures.
- Odynophagia is pain during swallowing particularly with alcohol and hot liquids. It suggests oesophageal inflammation (oesophagitis) due to

gastro-oesophageal reflux disease, infections of the oesophagus (herpes simplex virus, *Candida*) or drugs such as slow release potassium or bisphosphonates.

## Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD)

Reflux of gastric contents into the oesophagus is a normal event. Clinical symptoms only occur when there is prolonged contact of gastric contents with the oesophageal mucosa.

### Pathophysiology

The lower oesophageal sphincter (LOS) tone is reduced, and there are frequent transient LOS relaxations. There is increased mucosal sensitivity to gastric acid and reduced oesophageal clearance of acid. Delayed gastric emptying and prolonged post-prandial and nocturnal reflux also contribute. Mechanical or functional aberrations associated with a hiatus hernia may contribute to GORD, but reflux disease can occur in the absence of a hiatus hernia. Other predisposing factors in GORD include obesity, pregnancy, systemic sclerosis and certain drugs (e.g. nitrates, tricyclics).

### Clinical features

Heartburn (p. 73) is the major symptom. There may also be regurgitation and odynophagia (p. 73). Cough and nocturnal asthma can occur from aspiration of gastric contents into the lungs. Symptoms do not correlate well with the severity of oesophagitis.

### Investigations

The diagnosis is clinical and most patients are treated without investigation. OGD is indicated in patients with new-onset heartburn over 55 years of age or patients with alarm symptoms (weight loss, dysphagia, haematemesis, anaemia) suspicious for upper gastrointestinal malignancy. It is also performed to document complications of reflux (see Barrett's oesophagus, p. 75) and in patients who do not respond well to treatment.

**OGD** may show oesophagitis (mucosal erythema, erosions and ulceration), a hiatus hernia or Barrett's oesophagus (p. 75). The oesophageal mucosa can be normal in patients with reflux.

**24-hour intraluminal pH monitoring or impedance** (p. 71) is usually reserved for the confirmation of GORD prior to surgery or where there is an inadequate response to standard doses of proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) (p. 129).

### Management

Conservative measures with lifestyle changes (weight loss, avoidance of excess alcohol and of aggravating foods, cessation of smoking) and simple



antacids are often sufficient for mild symptoms in the absence of oesophagitis. Patients with severe symptoms or with proven pathology (oesophagitis or complications) require PPIs.

- *Alginate-containing antacids* (p. 126) are usually first-line treatments; they prevent reflux by forming a 'foam raft' on gastric contents.
- *H<sub>2</sub>-receptor antagonists* (e.g. ranitidine, p. 127) improve the symptoms of heartburn.
- *Prokinetic agents* (p. 136) such as metoclopramide and domperidone, are occasionally helpful.
- *PPIs* (e.g. omeprazole, esomeprazole, lansoprazole, pantoprazole, p. 129) inhibit gastric hydrogen/potassium-ATPase and block the luminal secretion of gastric acid. They are potent acid blockers and the drugs of choice for all but mild cases. Given the propensity of reflux symptoms to relapse, maintenance acid-suppressive therapy is often necessary. In these cases the aim is to reduce to the minimum dose necessary to control symptoms ('step-down approach').
- *Surgery* may be necessary for the few patients who continue to have symptoms in spite of full medical therapy, or in young people whose symptoms return rapidly on stopping treatment. Via a laparoscopic approach the fundus of the stomach is sutured around the lower oesophagus to produce an antireflux valve (Nissen fundoplication, 'lap wrap'). Specific complications of this procedure are dysphagia and bloating.

## Complications

**Oesophageal stricture formation** presents with gradually worsening dysphagia. It is treated with endoscopic dilatation and long-term PPI therapy. Chronic GORD may also underlie the development of a *Schatzki ring* (localized mucosal stricture at the gastro-oesophageal junction), which also presents with dysphagia.

**Barrett's oesophagus**, an abnormal columnar epithelium (specialized intestinal columnar metaplasia, SIM) replaces the squamous epithelium that normally lines the distal oesophagus. It develops in response to longstanding acid reflux and is irreversible. Diagnosis is based on endoscopic appearances (pale glossy squamous epithelium is replaced by red-coloured columnar epithelium) and biopsies from the columnar epithelium (showing SIM). Barrett's oesophagus is premalignant for adenocarcinoma of the oesophagus. Patients with this condition are treated with PPIs and undergo endoscopic surveillance every 2 years with multiple oesophageal biopsies to look for dysplasia or carcinoma. The detection and management of Barrett's oesophagus is controversial and a changing area. Endoscopic screening to initially detect Barrett's oesophagus is usually recommended in patients with longstanding (>10 years) heartburn. Definite high-grade dysplasia (confirmed by two pathologists) on follow-up endoscopic surveillance is a significant risk

for an incident cancer and the management options include oesophagectomy (for a young fit patient), endoscopic mucosal resection (for a localized area of high-grade dysplasia) or endoscopic ablative therapies (photodynamic therapy, radiofrequency ablation) to ablate the dysplastic tissue. Patients with low-grade dysplasia undergo more intensive (6–12 monthly) endoscopic surveillance.

## Achalasia

This is of unknown aetiology. Oesophageal aperistalsis and failure of relaxation of the LOS impair oesophageal emptying.

### Pathology

There is a decrease in ganglionic cells in the nerve plexus of the oesophageal wall and degeneration in the vagus nerve.

### Clinical features

It occurs at all ages but is rare in childhood. There is usually a long history of dysphagia for both liquids and solids, which may be associated with regurgitation. Retrosternal chest pain may occur and be misdiagnosed as cardiac pain.

### Investigations

- **Barium swallow** is the initial investigation and shows a dilated oesophagus with a gradually tapering lower end (beak deformity). There is absence of peristalsis and sometimes asynchronous, purposeless, contractions of the oesophageal body.
- **Oesophageal manometry** confirms the diagnosis. It demonstrates aperistalsis and failure of LOS relaxation on swallowing.
- **OGD** (p. 67) may be necessary to exclude oesophageal cancer, which can produce similar symptoms and X-ray appearance ('pseudoachalasia').
- **Chest X-ray** is not necessary for diagnosis. It may show a dilated oesophagus with a fluid level behind the heart. The fundal gas shadow is absent.

### Management

There is no cure. Goals of treatment are relief of symptoms and improved oesophageal emptying. Endoscopic balloon dilatation (2% risk of oesophageal perforation) or surgical division of the LOS (Heller's cardiomyotomy) are the most effective treatments. Medical treatment to relax the LOS (oral nitrates or nifedipine, endoscopic injection of botulinum toxin into the LOS) is used in elderly or frail patients for whom the invasive methods of treatment pose

unacceptable risks. However, they have limited efficacy. GORD is a complication of all treatments, particularly surgery.

## Complications

There is a slight increase in the incidence of squamous carcinoma of the oesophagus in both treated and untreated patients.

### Systemic sclerosis

There is oesophageal involvement in most patients with systemic sclerosis. The smooth muscle layer is replaced by fibrous tissue and LOS pressure is reduced, thereby permitting gastro-oesophageal reflux. Symptoms are the result of reflux (leading to oesophagitis and strictures) and oesophageal hypomotility. Treatment is as for reflux and stricture formation.

### Other oesophageal dysmotility disorders

Three types are characterized on oesophageal manometry: diffuse oesophageal spasm (simultaneous contractions in the distal oesophagus), nutcracker oesophagus (high-amplitude peristaltic waves), and hypertensive lower oesophageal sphincter (raised resting pressure). They present with dysphagia and chest pain and abnormalities may be seen on barium swallow ('corkscrew' appearance in diffuse oesophageal spasm) and manometry. Nitrates and calcium-channel blockers, e.g. oral nifedipine, sometimes help symptoms. Treatment of GORD may help.

### Hiatus hernia

Part of the stomach herniates through the oesophageal hiatus of the diaphragm:

- *Sliding* accounts for more than 95% of cases. The gastro-oesophageal junction slides through the hiatus and lies above the diaphragm. A sliding hiatus hernia does not cause any symptoms unless there is associated reflux.
- *Para-oesophageal hernias* are uncommon. The gastric fundus rolls up through the hiatus alongside the oesophagus, the gastro-oesophageal junction remaining below the diaphragm. These pose a serious risk of complications including gastric volvulus (rotation and strangulation of the stomach), bleeding and respiratory complications. They should be treated surgically.

### Benign oesophageal strictures

The causes vary geographically; benign peptic stricture secondary to long-standing GORD is the commonest cause in developed countries. Other causes

are ingestion of corrosives, after radiotherapy or endoscopic treatment of oesophageal varices, and following prolonged nasogastric tube placement. Dysphagia is the main symptom and treatment is with endoscopic dilatation, PPIs and sometimes surgery.

## Oesophageal perforation

**Iatrogenic perforation** occurs after endoscopic dilatation of oesophageal strictures (usually malignant) or achalasia, or rarely after passage of a nasogastric tube.

**Traumatic or spontaneous oesophageal rupture** occurs after blunt chest trauma or forceful vomiting (Boerhaave's syndrome). There is severe chest pain, fever, hypotension and surgical emphysema (crepitation).

Chest X-ray may be normal or show air in the mediastinum and neck, and a pleural effusion. Diagnosis is made with CT scan or water soluble contrast swallow.

Management should be in a surgical unit. Treatment is with intravenous antibiotics, nil by mouth and intravenous fluids. Surgical repair may be needed immediately or for patients who fail to settle with conservative management.

## Malignant oesophageal tumours

### Pathology

- Squamous cell, usually of the middle third of the oesophagus
- Adenocarcinoma, lower third of oesophagus.

### Epidemiology and aetiological factors

**Squamous carcinoma** The incidence is 5–10 per 100 000 in the UK, but world-wide it varies greatly, being particularly high in China and parts of Africa and Iran. It is most common in the 60–70-year age group. Major risk factors are smoking and excess alcohol consumption. Other risk factors are important in specific regions with a high incidence (high intake of salted fish and pickled vegetables and ingestion of very hot food and beverages). Pre-existing oesophageal disease (achalasia and caustic strictures) and coeliac disease also increase the risk.

**Adenocarcinoma** arises from Barrett's metaplasia (p. 75). Smoking and obesity are also risk factors.

### Clinical features

There is progressive dysphagia (initially for solids and later for liquids) and weight loss. Bolus food impaction or local infiltration may cause chest pain. Physical signs are usually absent.

## Investigations

These are to confirm the diagnosis and stage the tumour (TNM system, p. 829).

- Diagnosis is by OGD (p. 67) and tumour biopsy. A barium swallow will show the strictured area but biopsy specimens cannot be taken.
- Staging is initially by CT scan of the chest and abdomen to look for distant metastases. Patients without evidence of metastatic disease and who are potentially curable, then undergo EUS (p. 69) to locally stage the tumour (depth of wall invasion and local lymph node involvement), PET scanning (more sensitive than CT to detect distant metastases) and sometimes laparoscopy to detect occult peritoneal disease.

## Management

Surgical resection provides the best chance of cure and is performed when the tumour has not infiltrated outside of the oesophageal wall. It is combined with pre-operative chemotherapy with or without radiotherapy (neo-adjuvant treatment). However, over half of patients present with incurable locally advanced or metastatic disease. Systemic chemotherapy may temporarily improve symptoms in patients with metastatic disease although local treatments may be necessary for relief of dysphagia. These include endoscopic insertion of an expanding metal stent across the tumour, or laser and alcohol injections to cause tumour necrosis. For patients with non-metastatic but locally unresectable disease, combined radiotherapy and chemotherapy may limit disease progression and increase survival.

## Prognosis

The prognosis overall is poor with 10% 5-year survival.

### Benign oesophageal tumours

See page 86 (gastrointestinal stromal tumour, GIST).

## THE STOMACH AND DUODENUM

The major functions of the stomach are:

- Emulsification of fat and mechanical breakup of food.
- A reservoir for food.
- Secretion of intrinsic factor (required for absorption of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, p. 199) and gastric acid from parietal cells in the fundus. Gastric acid begins the process of protein digestion and has a protective role by destroying bacteria. Acid secretion is increased by vagal nerve stimulation, histamine and gastrin, and reduced by somatostatin from antral D cells.

- Secretion of mucus and pepsinogen from chief cells in the fundus. Pepsinogen is converted by gastric acid to pepsin which breaks down protein.

### *Helicobacter pylori* infection

*H. pylori* is a Gram-negative urease-producing spiral-shaped bacterium found predominantly in the gastric antrum and in areas of gastric metaplasia in the duodenum. It is closely associated with chronic active gastritis, peptic ulcer disease (gastric and duodenal ulcers), gastric cancer and gastric B cell lymphoma (p. 86). However, most patients with the infection are asymptomatic.

### Epidemiology

Infection is acquired in childhood and persists for life unless treated. The incidence increases with age probably due to acquisition in childhood when hygiene was poorer. Infection is associated with lower socio-economic status and is commoner in developing countries. Transmission is most likely via the oral–oral or faecal–oral routes.

### Clinicopathological features

*H. pylori* infection produces a gastritis (p. 85) mainly in the antrum of the stomach. In some individuals gastritis can involve the body of the stomach, leading to atrophic gastritis and in some cases intestinal metaplasia, which is a premalignant condition.

### Diagnosis of infection

This is by non-invasive or invasive (antral biopsy for patients undergoing an endoscopy) tests (Table 3.3).

### Management

Eradication of *H. pylori* is indicated for all patients with peptic ulcer disease, atrophic gastritis, gastric B cell lymphoma (p. 86), after gastric cancer resection and in patients with dyspepsia ('test and treat' strategy, p. 84). It is also indicated for individuals who have a first-degree relative with gastric cancer. Recurrence is rare after successful eradication. Several treatment regimens are available, although PPI-based triple therapy regimens for 7 days are favoured. Examples are:

- Omeprazole 20 mg + metronidazole 400 mg + clarithromycin 500 mg – all twice daily
- Omeprazole 20 mg + amoxicillin 1 g + clarithromycin 500 mg – all twice daily.

**Table 3.3** Diagnosis of *Helicobacter pylori* infection

|   | Method   | Main use  | Comments   |
|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Non-invasive tests</b>                                 |  |   |  |
| <sup>13</sup> C-Urea breath test                          | Hydrolysis of ingested <sup>13</sup> C-Urea by <i>H. pylori</i> to produce <sup>13</sup> C in expired air                      | Diagnosis of infection<br>Monitoring of infection after eradication | Highly sensitive and specific<br>False-negative results after recent use of PPIs or antibiotics  |
| Stool antigen test  | Immunoassay using monoclonal antibodies  |   |  |
| Serology  | Serum antibody detection   | Diagnosis of infection<br>Epidemiological studies                   | Inaccuracy limits use<br>Antibodies remain positive after infection cleared  |
| <b>Invasive tests (endoscopic gastric mucosal biopsy)</b> |  |   |  |
| Rapid urease (CLO) test                                   | Urease from <i>H. pylori</i> breaks down urea to produce ammonia causing a pH-dependent colour change in the indicator present | Diagnosis of infection in patients already undergoing endoscopy     | Highly sensitive and specific<br>False-negative results after recent upper gastrointestinal bleeding and recent use of PPIs or antibiotics |
| Histology   | Direct visualization of the organism   |   | Subject to sampling error and observer variability   |

*PPI, proton pump inhibitors.*

## Peptic ulcer disease

A peptic ulcer (PU) is an ulcer of the mucosa in or adjacent to an acid-bearing area. Most occur in the stomach or proximal duodenum.

### Epidemiology

Duodenal ulcers (DUs) are two to three times more common than gastric ulcers (GUs) and occur in 15% of the population at some time. They are more common in the elderly and there is a significant geographical variation.

### Aetiology

*H. pylori* and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)/aspirin are the cause of most PUs. Co-administration of corticosteroids and NSAIDs further

increases the risk of an ulcer. Potential pathogenic mechanisms for *H. pylori*-induced ulcers are listed in Table 3.4; reduction of gastric mucosal resistance is thought to be the main factor in causation of GUs as, in contrast to DUs, gastric acid secretion is reduced. Aspirin and NSAIDs cause ulcers, at least in part, by reduced production of prostaglandins (through inhibition of cyclooxygenase-1) which provide mucosal protection in the upper gastrointestinal tract. Less common causes of PUs are hyperparathyroidism, Zollinger–Ellison syndrome (p. 191), vascular insufficiency, sarcoidosis and Crohn's disease.

## Clinical features

Burning epigastric pain is the most common presenting symptom, typically relieved by antacids and a variable relationship to food. DU pain often occurs when the patient is hungry and classically occurs at night. Other symptoms, such as nausea, heartburn and flatulence, may occur. Occasionally ulcers may present with the complications of perforation or painless haemorrhage.

## Investigations

Patients less than 55 years with ulcer-type symptoms should undergo non-invasive testing for *H. pylori* infection (Table 3.3); upper gastrointestinal endoscopy is not usually necessary (see management of dyspepsia, p. 84). In patients who undergo endoscopy and are found to have a GU, multiple biopsies from the centre and edge of the ulcer are taken because it is often impossible to distinguish by naked eye a benign from malignant ulcer. A barium meal is useful if gastric outlet obstruction is suspected.

## Management

**Ulcers associated with *H. pylori*** Treatment regimens (p. 80) that successfully eradicate *H. pylori* result in ulcer healing rates of over 90% and prevent

**Table 3.4** Proposed pathogenic mechanisms of *H. pylori*

|   |
|---|
| Increased gastric acid secretion due to:                  |
| Increased gastrin secretion                               |
| Increased parietal cell mass                              |
| Decreased somatostatin production due to antral gastritis |
| Disruption of mucous protective layer                     |
| Reduced duodenal bicarbonate production                   |
| Production of virulence factors:                          |
| Vacuolating toxin (Vac A)                                 |
| Cytotoxic associated protein (CagA)                       |
| Urease  |
| Adherence factors   |



ulcer recurrence. There is usually no need to continue antisecretory treatment (with a PPI or H<sub>2</sub>-receptor antagonist) unless the ulcer is complicated by haemorrhage or perforation. This approach to treatment is indicated in all patients with *H. pylori*-associated peptic disease. Eradication is confirmed by either a urea breath test or faecal antigen testing in patients who remain symptomatic or who have had an ulcer complication.

***H. pylori*-negative peptic ulcers** are usually associated with aspirin or NSAID ingestion. Treatment is with PPIs (p. 129) and stopping aspirin/NSAID if at all possible. After ulcer healing, NSAIDs can only be continued with PPI prophylaxis, or NSAID therapy is switched to a selective cyclo-oxygenase-2 inhibitor (p. 317).

Follow-up endoscopy plus biopsy is performed for all GUs to demonstrate healing and exclude malignancy (initial biopsies may be false negatives).

**Surgery** is now rarely necessary for PU but is reserved for the treatment of complications.

## Complications

**Perforation** is uncommon. DUs perforate more commonly than GUs, usually into the peritoneal cavity. Treatment is surgical closure of the perforation and drainage of the abdomen. *H. pylori* should subsequently be eradicated. Conservative treatment with intravenous fluids and antibiotics may be indicated in elderly or very ill patients.

**Gastric outlet obstruction** Ulcer disease causing obstruction is now rare and carcinoma is the commonest cause. Outflow obstruction occurs because of surrounding oedema or scarring following healing. Copious projectile vomiting is the main symptom, and a succussion splash may be detectable clinically. Metabolic alkalosis may develop as a result of loss of acid. In patients with PU disease the oedema will usually settle with conservative management with nasogastric suction, replacement of fluids and electrolytes and PPIs. Surgery is rarely required.

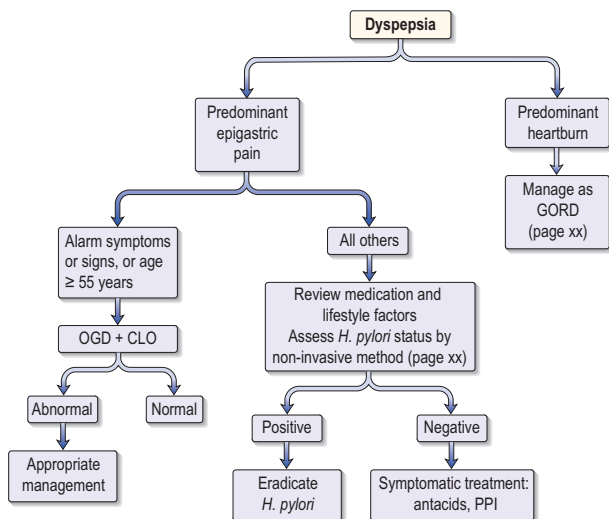
**Haemorrhage** See page 87.

## Management of dyspepsia

Significant gastrointestinal pathology is uncommon in most young people with dyspepsia (p. 65). Furthermore, the close association of *H. pylori* with peptic ulcer disease and the ability to detect *H. pylori* by non-invasive methods means that investigation with endoscopy is unnecessary in most patients. An approach to the management of dyspepsia is outlined in Fig. 3.2.

## Gastropathy and gastritis

*Gastropathy* is the term used when there is injury to the gastric mucosa associated with epithelial cell damage and regeneration. There is little or no



## Notes:

- Alarm symptoms or signs: dysphagia, weight loss, vomiting, gastrointestinal bleeding, epigastric mass.
- Think if pain could be originating from biliary tract (page xx) or pancreas (page xx) and patient needs US or CT scan.

**Fig. 3.2** Approach to the investigation of patients with dyspepsia. GORD, gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; CLO, rapid urease test, OGD, oesophagogastroduodenoscopy; PPI, proton pump inhibitor; US, ultrasound; CT, computed tomography.

accompanying inflammation. *Gastritis* is inflammation of the gastric mucosa. This distinction has caused considerable confusion, since gastritis is often used to describe endoscopic or radiological characteristics of the gastric mucosa rather than specific histological findings.

## Gastropathy

The commonest cause of gastropathy is mucosal damage associated with the use of aspirin or other NSAIDs. These drugs deplete mucosal prostaglandins, by inhibiting the cyclo-oxygenase pathway, which leads to mucosal damage (p. 317). Other causes include infections, e.g. cytomegalovirus and herpes simplex virus, and alcohol in high concentrations. Gastric erosions can also be seen after severe stress (stress ulcer), burns (Curling's ulcer), and in renal and liver disease. Symptoms include indigestion, vomiting and

haemorrhage, although these correlate poorly with endoscopic and pathological findings. Erosions (superficial breaks in the mucosa <3 mm) and sub-epithelial haemorrhage are most commonly seen at endoscopy. Treatment is with a PPI with removal of the offending cause if possible. Prophylaxis is also given to prevent future damage in patients who continue to take aspirin or NSAIDs.

## Gastritis

The commonest cause of gastritis is *H. pylori* infection (p. 80). Other causes are autoimmune gastritis (the cause of pernicious anaemia associated with antibodies to gastric parietal cells and intrinsic factor), viruses and duodeno-gastric reflux. Gastritis is a histological diagnosis and is usually discovered incidentally when a gastric mucosal biopsy is taken for histology at endoscopy. It is classified as acute or chronic. Acute inflammation is associated with neutrophilic infiltration, while chronic inflammation is characterized by mononuclear cells, chiefly lymphocytes, plasma cells and macrophages. Gastritis is usually asymptomatic; whether *H. pylori* gastritis itself produces functional dyspepsia is controversial (p. 117). At endoscopy the mucosa may appear reddened or normal. No specific treatment is required although eradication treatment for *H. pylori* is often given.

## Gastric cancer

### Epidemiology

Gastric cancer is the fourth most common cancer world-wide and the second leading cause of cancer-related mortality. Incidence increases with age and is more common in men. The frequency varies throughout the world, being more common in Japan and Chile, and relatively less common in the USA. Although the incidence overall is decreasing world-wide, proximal gastric cancers are increasing in frequency in the West.

### Aetiology

This is unknown; *H. pylori* infection is implicated, causing chronic gastritis which in some individuals leads to atrophic gastritis and premalignant intestinal metaplasia. Other risk factors are lifestyle (tobacco smoking, diets low in fruits and vegetables or high in salted, smoked or preserved foods), pernicious anaemia, family history of gastric cancer, and after partial gastrectomy.

### Pathology

Tumours most commonly occur in the antrum and are almost always adenocarcinomas. They are localized ulcerated lesions with rolled edges (intestinal, type 1), or diffuse with extensive submucosal spread, giving the picture of linitis plastica (diffuse, type 2).

## Clinical features

Pain similar to peptic ulcer pain is the most common symptom. With more advanced disease, nausea, anorexia and weight loss are common. Tumours near the pylorus cause outflow obstruction and vomiting and dysphagia occurs with lesions in the cardia. Almost 50% have a palpable epigastric mass, and a lymph node is sometimes felt in the supraclavicular fossa (Virchow's node). Metastases in the peritoneum and liver cause ascites and hepatomegaly. Skin manifestations of malignancy, such as dermatomyositis (p. 305) and acanthosis nigricans (p. 814), are occasionally associated.

## Investigations

Gastroscopy and biopsy is the initial investigation of choice. CT, EUS and laparoscopy are then used to stage the tumour in a similar manner to oesophageal cancer (p. 79).

## Management

Surgery is the most effective form of treatment if the tumour is operable. Adjuvant (postoperative) chemoradiotherapy is given for more advanced tumours. Palliative chemotherapy is sometimes used for unresectable lesions, with a modest improvement in survival.

## Prognosis

The overall survival is poor (10% 5-year survival). Five-year survival after 'curative' surgery is 50%. In Japan there is an active endoscopic screening programme, and earlier diagnosis and an aggressive surgical approach have resulted in a 5-year survival of 90%.

## Other gastric tumours

*GISTs* are the most common type of stromal or mesenchymal tumour of the gastrointestinal tract and occur most commonly in the stomach and proximal small intestine. They were previously considered to be benign but on prolonged follow-up, most have malignant potential. They are usually asymptomatic and discovered incidentally when an upper gastrointestinal endoscopy is performed for dyspepsia. They can ulcerate and bleed. Treatment is surgical resection or with imatinib (p. 254) for advanced disease.

*Gastric lymphoma* arises from mucosal areas and is called mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue tumour (MALToma). Gastric lymphoma presents similarly to gastric carcinoma. Most are associated with *H. pylori* infection and some can be treated by eradication of *H. pylori* only. Other patients are treated with surgery or chemotherapy with or without radiotherapy.

*Gastric polyps* are uncommon and usually regenerative. Adenomatous polyps are rare.

## GASTROINTESTINAL BLEEDING

### Acute upper gastrointestinal bleeding

This is a common emergency admission with an overall mortality rate of 5–12%. Haematemesis is the vomiting of blood. Melaena is the passage of black tarry stools (the result of altered blood) and usually indicates bleeding from a site proximal to the jejunum. Acute massive upper gastrointestinal bleeding may present with fresh rectal bleeding, almost always in association with shock.

### Aetiology

Peptic ulceration (PU) is the most common cause often associated with aspirin or NSAID ingestion (Fig. 3.3). Relative incidences vary according to patient population. Anticoagulants do not cause bleeding *per se* but bleeding from any cause is greater if the patient is anticoagulated.

### Management

This is summarized in Emergency Box 3.1.

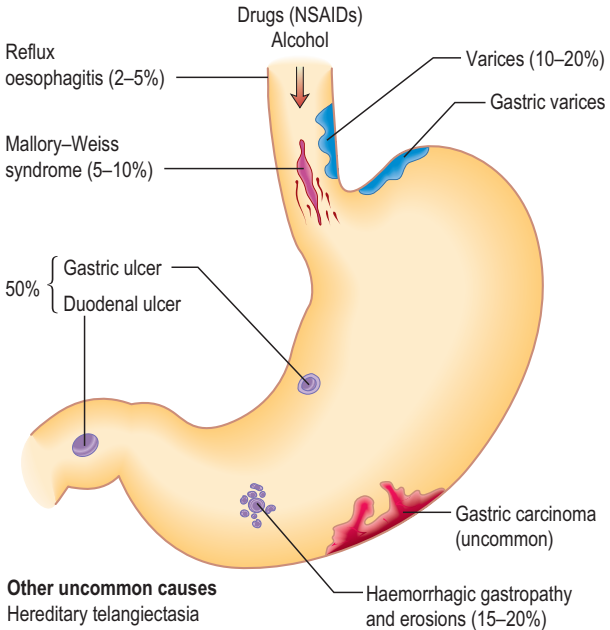
**Immediate management** Two large-bore (16-gauge) intravenous cannulas should be placed in a peripheral vein and blood taken for full blood count, liver biochemistry, urea and electrolytes, clotting screen and ‘group and save’; cross-match at least 4 units of blood if there is evidence of a large bleed (blood pressure <100 mmHg, pulse >100 beats per min, cool or cold extremities with slow capillary refill, Hb <10 g/dL). Intravenous fluids (0.9% saline) are started while the patient is assessed further, including a history and physical examination.

**Risk assessment** is made using a scoring system such as the ‘Rockall’ Score (Table 3.5). It helps to identify those at high risk of recurrent or life-threatening haemorrhage and those at low risk who may be suitable for early hospital discharge (pre-endoscopy score 0, post-endoscopy  $\leq 1$ ).

**Resuscitate** In many patients no specific treatment is required, bleeding stops spontaneously and the patient remains well compensated. In patients with large bleeds (see above) or clinical signs of shock urgent blood transfusion is required (p. 576). Monitoring pulse rate and central venous pressure will guide transfusion requirements.

### Pre-endoscopy drug therapy

- *Aspirin, NSAIDs and warfarin* are stopped and the INR reversed if necessary (p. 246). Cardiology advice should be sought before stopping aspirin and clopidogrel in patients with low-risk bleeds.
- *PPIs* (omeprazole 80 mg bolus i.v. followed by infusion of 8 mg/h) are given to high risk patients (Rockall score  $\geq 4$ ) in whom endoscopy cannot be performed immediately.



#### Other uncommon causes

- Hereditary telangiectasia (Osler–Weber–Rendu syndrome)
- Pseudoxanthoma elasticum
- Blood dyscrasias
- Dieulafoy gastric vascular abnormality
- Portal gastropathy
- Aortic graft surgery with fistula
- Haemobilia (bleeding into the biliary tree)

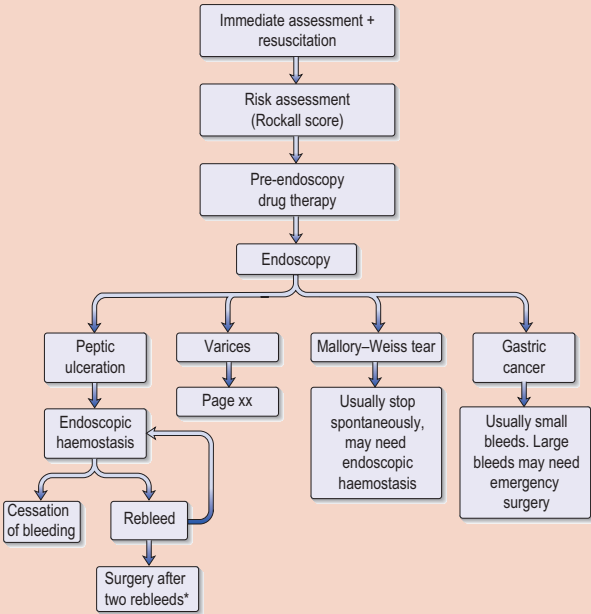
**Fig. 3.3** Causes of upper gastrointestinal haemorrhage. The approximate frequency is also given.

- *Antibiotics* are given to patients with suspected variceal haemorrhage (p. 164). Consider also terlipressin in these patients.

**Determine site of bleeding** This may be evident from the history, e.g. bleeding from a PU is suggested by recent aspirin or NSAID ingestion or previous PU. A history of vomiting preceding the haematemesis suggests a Mallory–Weiss tear (linear mucosal tear at the oesophagogastric junction). Suspect variceal bleeding in patients with liver disease or known varices. After resuscitation, upper gastrointestinal endoscopy should be performed as soon as possible and preferably within 24 hours. More urgent endoscopy is

## Emergency Box 3.1

### Approach to the management of upper gastrointestinal bleeding



NB – less common causes of upper gastrointestinal bleeding are not indicated on this figure.

\*Consider angiography with transcatheter embolization of bleeding lesions if high-risk surgical patient.

indicated in patients with shock, continued bleeding or suspected varices (e.g. signs of chronic liver disease).

**Specific management** Varices are treated with banding or sclerotherapy (p. 165). Ulcers with high-risk stigmata for continued or re-bleeding (active bleeding, visible vessel, overlying clot) should undergo endoscopic haemostasis by injection of dilute adrenaline (epinephrine) together with coagulation of the vessel with thermal therapy (heater or bipolar probe), or application of

**Table 3.5** Rockall score for upper gastrointestinal haemorrhage

|                     | Score 0                             | Score 1                        | Score 2  | Score 3  |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Age (years)</b>  | <60                                 | 60–79                          | >80  |  |
| <b>Shock</b>        | None                                | Pulse >100<br>Systolic BP >100 | Pulse >100<br>Systolic BP <100   |  |
| <b>Co-morbidity</b> | None                                |                                | Cardiac failure, IHD, co-morbidity   | Renal/liver failure, any other disseminated malignancy |
| Endoscopic stigmata | None or dark spot seen              |                                | Blood in upper gastrointestinal tract<br>Adherent clot<br>Visible or spurting vessel |  |
| Diagnosis           | M–W tear: no lesion seen and no SRH | All other diagnoses            | Malignancy of upper gastrointestinal tract   |  |

*Parameters indicated in bold calculate a pre-endoscopy Rockall score – maximum 7. Final Rockall score – maximum 11.*

*M–W tear, Mallory–Weiss tear; SRH, stigmata of recent haemorrhage; IHD, ischaemic heart disease.*

*Low risk patients (post-endoscopy score ≤1) 5% risk of re-bleeding, 0% risk of death. High risk patients (post-endoscopy score 5–11), 11–41% risk of death.*

*Death and re-bleeding are particularly common in inpatients and patients with varices.*

mechanical clips (endoclips) to the vessel. Intravenous PPIs (p. 129) are given for 72 hours following endoscopic therapy in PU bleeding; they reduce re-bleeding rates and transfusion requirements. Surgery is required for persistent or recurrent bleeding from ulcers.

## Post-endoscopy

In general, young patients with PU bleeding who are otherwise fit and haemodynamically stable and who have no stigmata of recent bleeding can be discharged from hospital within 24 hours (post-endoscopy Rockall Score ≤1). *H. pylori* eradication treatment is given (p. 80) and eradication confirmed by a urea breath test or faecal antigen testing. Assessment of ongoing need for antiplatelet therapy is made and essential treatment is co-prescribed with a PPI.



## Lower gastrointestinal bleeding

Bright red or altered blood per rectum suggests bleeding from the colon or small intestine. Massive bleeding is rare and usually from diverticular disease or ischaemic colitis (Table 3.6). Minor bleeds from haemorrhoids and anal fissure are common.

### Management

Resuscitation with intravenous fluids or blood is necessary with large bleeds. The site of bleeding is determined from the history and physical examination including a rectal examination and the following investigations as appropriate:

- Proctoscopy to look for anorectal disease e.g. haemorrhoids.
- Sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy for inflammatory bowel disease, polyps, colon cancer, diverticular disease, ischaemic colitis, vascular lesions.
- Angiography for vascular abnormality, e.g. angiodysplasia.

In the non-emergency setting, bright red fresh rectal bleeding is likely to originate from a source distal to the splenic flexure and is usually investigated with a flexible sigmoidoscopy rather than full colonoscopy.

**Specific management** Lesions are treated as appropriate.

## Chronic gastrointestinal bleeding

Chronic gastrointestinal bleeding presents with iron deficiency anaemia. All such patients require investigation of the gastrointestinal tract particularly to

**Table 3.6** Causes of lower gastrointestinal bleeding

### Colonic

Haemorrhoids

Anal fissure

Neoplasms: benign and malignant

Colitis: ulcerative colitis, Crohn's, infective, ischaemic

Angiodysplasia (abnormal collections of blood vessels)

Diverticular disease

### Small intestine

Neoplasms

Ulcerative disease: Crohn's disease, vasculitis, NSAIDs

Angiodysplasia

Meckel's diverticulum

*NB: acute massive upper gastrointestinal bleeding may present with fresh rectal bleeding usually with haemodynamic instability.*

*NSAIDs, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.*

exclude a malignancy. The exception is menstruating women less than 50 years of age without gastrointestinal symptoms, in whom anaemia is assumed to be due to menstrual blood loss. Causes of chronic blood loss are those that cause acute bleeding (see Fig. 3.3, p. 88 and Table 3.6). However, oesophageal varices, duodenal ulcers and diverticular disease rarely bleed chronically. Malabsorption (most frequently from coeliac disease), previous gastrectomy and, rarely, poor dietary intake are causes of iron deficiency and will also present with anaemia.

## Investigations

Iron deficiency anaemia is investigated with OGD and colonoscopy ('top and tail') performed at the same endoscopic session; a distal duodenal biopsy is taken to look for coeliac disease. Further investigations, usually in the order listed, are only warranted in anaemia not responding to iron treatment or if there is abdominal pain or visible blood loss:

- Small bowel barium follow-through or MRI (usually only helpful if there are symptoms to suggest Crohn's disease)
- Video capsule endoscopy
- Enteroscopy (push and/or balloon-assisted) is particularly useful for endoscopic therapy of vascular lesions seen at capsule endoscopy
- Coeliac axis and mesenteric angiography
- Technetium-labelled red cell scan.

## Management

The cause of the bleeding is treated and oral iron (p. 240) is given to treat the anaemia.

## THE SMALL INTESTINE

The principal role of the small intestine is the digestion and absorption of nutrients. Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> and bile salts have specific receptors in the terminal ileum but other nutrients are absorbed throughout the small intestine.

Presenting symptoms of small bowel disease are diarrhoea, steatorrhoea (p. 67), abdominal pain or discomfort, and anorexia causing weight loss. Small bowel disease may also be found after investigation for specific deficiencies such as vitamin B<sub>12</sub>. The two most common causes of small bowel disease in developed countries are coeliac disease and Crohn's disease. Disorders of the small intestine causing malabsorption are shown in Table 3.7. Investigation of suspected small bowel disease (e.g. in a symptomatic patient and/or folate/B<sub>12</sub> deficiency) is initially with coeliac serology, small bowel barium follow or MRI, and endoscopic small bowel biopsy.

**Table 3.7** Disorders of the small intestine causing malabsorption

|  |
|--|
| Coeliac disease                                      |
| Crohn's disease                                      |
| Dermatitis herpetiformis                             |
| Tropical sprue                                       |
| Bacterial overgrowth                                 |
| Intestinal resection                                 |
| Whipple's disease                                    |
| Radiation enteritis                                  |
| Parasite infection, e.g. <i>Giardia intestinalis</i> |

## Coeliac disease (gluten-sensitive enteropathy)

This is an autoimmune condition characterized by an abnormal jejunal mucosa that improves when gluten (contained in wheat, rye and barley) is withdrawn from the diet and relapses when gluten is reintroduced. About 1 in 100 individuals in European-derived populations have coeliac disease, most of whom are undiagnosed.

### Aetiopathogenesis

A strong association exists between coeliac disease and two human leucocyte antigen (HLA) class II molecules, HLA DQ2 and DQ8. The peptide  $\alpha$ -gliadin is the toxic portion of gluten. Gliadin is resistant to proteases in the small intestinal lumen and passes through a damaged (as a result of an infection or possibly gliadin itself) epithelial barrier of the small intestine where it is deaminated by tissue transglutaminase so increasing its immunogenicity. Gliadin then interacts with antigen-presenting cells in the lamina propria via HLA DQ2 and DQ8 and activates gluten-sensitive T cells. The resultant inflammatory cascade and release of mediators contribute to the villous atrophy and crypt hyperplasia that are typical histological features of coeliac disease. There is an increase in intraepithelial lymphocytes but the pathogenic role of these lymphocytes, compared with lamina propria lymphocytes, is controversial.

### Clinical features

Presentation is at any age but there are two peaks in incidence: in infancy (after weaning on to gluten-containing foods) and in adults in the fifth decade. There may be non-specific symptoms of tiredness and malaise, or symptoms of small intestinal disease (see above). Physical signs are usually few and non-specific, and related to anaemia and nutritional deficiency. There is an increased incidence of atopy and autoimmune diseases (Table 3.8).

**Table 3.8** Individuals who should be offered serological testing for coeliac disease

|  |
|--|
| Autoimmune disease   |
| Type 1 diabetes mellitus   |
| Thyroid disease  |
| Autoimmune liver disease   |
| Addison's disease  |
| Irritable bowel syndrome (symptoms may be similar to coeliac disease)                |
| Unexplained osteoporosis   |
| Those with a first degree relative (10-fold increase compared to general population) |
| Down's syndrome (20-fold increase)   |
| Turner's syndrome  |
| Infertility and recurrent miscarriage  |

## Investigations

**Serum antibodies** IgA tissue transglutaminase (tTG) antibodies have a very high sensitivity and specificity for coeliac disease. False negatives occur in IgA deficiency (2% of coeliacs) when IgG based tests should be used. IgA endomysial (EMA) antibodies are less sensitive. Serological testing is offered to patients with signs or symptoms or in conditions where there is an increased risk of disease (Table 3.8). Patients with positive serology or if serology is negative but coeliac disease is strongly suspected are referred for intestinal biopsy.

**Distal duodenal biopsies** (obtained endoscopically) are required for a definitive diagnosis. Histological changes are of variable severity and show an increase in the number of intraepithelial lymphocytes, crypt hyperplasia with chronic inflammatory cells in the lamina propria and villous atrophy. The latter is seen in other conditions (e.g. tropical sprue, Whipple's disease) but coeliac disease is the commonest cause of subtotal villous atrophy.

**Blood count** A mild anaemia is present in 50% of cases. There is almost always folate deficiency, commonly iron deficiency and, rarely, vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency.

**Small bowel radiology or capsule endoscopy** is usually only performed when a complication is suspected such as lymphoma.

**Bone densitometry** (dual energy X-ray absorptiometry [DXA] scan, p. 311) is performed at diagnosis because of the increased risk of osteoporosis.

## Management

Treatment is with a lifelong gluten-free diet and correction of any vitamin deficiencies. Pneumococcal vaccine is given as coeliac disease is associated

with hyposplenism (p. 222). Symptoms and serologic testing (undetectable antibodies indicate a response) are used to monitor recovery and compliance with the diet; re-biopsy is reserved for patients who do not respond or in whom there is diagnostic uncertainty.

## Complications

There is an increased incidence of malignancy, particularly intestinal T cell lymphoma, small bowel and oesophageal cancer. The incidence may be reduced by a gluten-free diet.

### Dermatitis herpetiformis

Dermatitis herpetiformis is an itchy, symmetrical eruption of vesicles and crusts over the extensor surfaces of the body, with deposition of granular immunoglobulin (Ig) A at the dermoepidermal junction of the skin including areas not involved with the rash. Patients also have a gluten-sensitive enteropathy, which is usually asymptomatic. The skin condition responds to dapsone, but both the gut and the skin will improve on a gluten-free diet.

### Tropical sprue

This is a progressive small intestinal disorder presenting with diarrhoea, steatorrhoea and megaloblastic anaemia. It occurs in residents or visitors to endemic areas in the tropics (Asia, some Caribbean islands, Puerto Rico, parts of South America). The aetiology is unknown but likely to be infective. Diagnosis is based on demonstrating evidence of malabsorption (particularly of fat and vitamin B<sub>12</sub>) together with a small bowel mucosal biopsy showing features similar, but not identical, to those in untreated coeliac disease. Infective causes of diarrhoea, particularly *Giardia intestinalis*, should be excluded. Treatment is with folic acid and tetracycline for 3–6 months and correction of nutritional deficiencies.

### Bacterial overgrowth

The upper small intestine is almost sterile. Bacterial overgrowth occurs when there is stasis of intestinal contents as a result of abnormal motility, e.g. systemic sclerosis, or a structural abnormality, e.g. previous small bowel surgery or a diverticulum.

## Clinical features

The bacteria deconjugate bile salts causing diarrhoea and/or steatorrhoea, and metabolize vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, which may result in deficiency.

## Diagnosis

A therapeutic trial of antibiotics is given when clinical suspicion is high. Otherwise, diagnosis is usually by a hydrogen breath test in which hydrogen is measured in exhaled air after oral lactulose. With bacterial overgrowth an early peak is seen in the breath hydrogen followed by the later colonic peak (normally present due to metabolism of lactulose by colonic bacteria).

## Management

The underlying cause should be corrected if possible. Otherwise, rotating courses of antibiotics e.g. tetracycline and metronidazole, are given.

### Intestinal resection

The effects of small intestinal resection depend on the extent and the area involved. Resection of the terminal ileum leads to malabsorption of:

- Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, leading to megaloblastic anaemia
- Bile salts, which overflow into the colon. This causes secretion of water and electrolytes and diarrhoea, and increased oxalate absorption, which may result in renal oxalate stones (p. 377).

More extensive resection leaving less than 1 m of small bowel is followed by the *short bowel syndrome*. The majority of cases occur after resection due to Crohn's disease, mesenteric ischaemia, trauma, volvulus, or surgical complications. Parenteral nutrition is the mainstay of treatment for patients in whom absorptive function has failed. Intestinal transplantation is used in a few centres.

The ability of patients to cope without supplemental intravenous fluids or nutrition depends on the:

- *Amount* of resected bowel – most patients with <100 cm of jejunum and no colon will require supplements.
- *Location* of resected bowel (jejunal resection is better tolerated than ileal).
- *Colon* intact which absorbs water and electrolytes.
- *Health* of the residual intestine, i.e. there are fewer problems after resection following trauma than in patients with Crohn's disease.

### Whipple's disease

This is a rare disease caused by the bacterium *Tropheryma whipplei*. Steatorrhoea, abdominal pain, fever, lymphadenopathy, arthritis and neurological involvement occur. Small bowel biopsy shows periodic acid-Schiff (PAS)-positive macrophages which on electron microscopy are seen to contain the causative bacteria. Treatment is with co-trimoxazole for 1 year.

## MISCELLANEOUS SMALL INTESTINAL CONDITIONS

### Tuberculosis

This results from reactivation of the primary disease caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (p. 541). In developed countries it is most commonly seen in ethnic minority groups or patients who are immunocompromised due to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection or drugs. The ileocaecal valve is the most common site affected.

### Clinical features

There is abdominal pain, diarrhoea, anorexia, weight loss and fever. A mass may be palpable. Presentation can be similar to Crohn's disease.

### Diagnosis

**Imaging** Chest X-ray shows evidence of pulmonary tuberculosis in 50% of cases. The small bowel follow-through may show features similar to those of Crohn's disease (p. 102). US or CT shows mesenteric thickening and lymphadenopathy.

**Histology** and culture of tissue is desirable but not always possible and treatment is started if there is a high degree of suspicion. Specimens can be obtained at laparoscopy; laparotomy is rarely required.

### Management

Treatment is similar to that for pulmonary tuberculosis (p. 544) but given for 1 year.

### Protein-losing enteropathy

Increased protein loss across an abnormal intestinal mucosa occasionally leads to hypoalbuminaemia and oedema. Causes include Crohn's disease, Ménétrier's disease (thickening and enlargement of gastric folds), coeliac disease and lymphatic disorders, e.g. lymphangiectasia.

### Meckel's diverticulum

A diverticulum projects from the wall of the ileum approximately 60 cm from the ileocaecal valve. About 50% contain gastric mucosa which secretes acid, and peptic ulceration may occur. Presentation is with lower gastrointestinal bleeding (p. 91), perforation, inflammation (presents similarly to appendicitis) or with obstruction (due to an associated band). Treatment is surgical removal.

## Intestinal ischaemia

Ischaemia is usually due to reduced arterial inflow as a result of atheroma, embolism (e.g. in atrial fibrillation), vasculitis (p. 307) or profound and prolonged shock. It presents acutely with severe abdominal pain but often little to find on abdominal examination. Surgery is necessary to resect the gangrenous bowel and the mortality is high. It may also present chronically with post-prandial abdominal pain and weight loss. Diagnosis is made by angiography.

## Tumours of the small intestine

These are rare and present with abdominal pain, diarrhoea, anorexia and anaemia. Carcinoid tumours have additional clinical features, described below.

### Malignant tumours

Adenocarcinoma accounts for 50% of malignant small bowel tumours; there is an increased incidence in coeliac disease and Crohn's disease. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma constitutes 15% of malignant small bowel tumours and may be B cell or T cell in origin. The latter occur with increased frequency in coeliac disease. Treatment is surgical excision with or without chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

### Benign small bowel tumours

- Peutz–Jeghers syndrome is an autosomal dominant condition with mucocutaneous pigmentation (circumoral, hands and feet) and hamartomatous gastrointestinal polyps. Polyps may occur anywhere in the gastrointestinal tract, but are most common in the small bowel. They may bleed or cause intussusception, and may undergo malignant change.
- Adenomas, leiomyomas and lipomas are rare. They are usually asymptomatic and discovered incidentally.
- Familial adenomatous polyposis (p. 111).

## Carcinoid tumours

### Pathology

These originate from enterochromaffin cells (serotonin producing) of the intestine. *Carcinoid syndrome* is the term applied to the symptoms that arise as a result of serotonin (5-hydroxytryptamine, 5-HT), kinins, histamine and prostaglandins, released into the circulation by the tumour.



## Clinical features

Patients with gastrointestinal carcinoid tumours have the carcinoid syndrome only if they have liver metastases. Tumour products are then able to drain directly into the hepatic vein (without being metabolized by the liver) and into the systemic circulation, where they cause flushing, wheezing, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, and right-sided cardiac valvular fibrosis causing stenosis and regurgitation.

## Investigations

A high level of 5-hydroxyindoleacetic acid (5-HIAA), the breakdown product of serotonin, is found in the urine in the carcinoid syndrome. A liver ultrasound confirms the presence of metastases.

## Management

Treatment of the carcinoid syndrome is symptomatic and aimed at:

- Inhibition of tumour products with the somatostatin analogue, octreotide, or with 5-HT antagonists, e.g. cyproheptadine
- Reducing tumour mass through surgical resection, hepatic artery embolization, radiofrequency ablation or chemotherapy.

## INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE

Inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD) are a group of chronic systemic diseases involving inflammation of the intestine and include: ulcerative colitis (UC), which only affects the colon; Crohn's disease (CD), which can affect the entire gastrointestinal tract; and indeterminate colitis, which shows features of both CD and UC.

## Epidemiology

IBD occurs world-wide but is most common in Northern Europe, the UK and North America. Presentation is usually in the teens and twenties. In the UK, there are about 400 IBD patients per 100 000 population.

## Aetiology

IBD represents the outcome of three essential interacting co-factors: genetic susceptibility, the environment and host immune response.

### Genetic susceptibility

- Genetic association is stronger for CD than UC.
- There is familial aggregation of disease.
- Concordance rates are higher in monozygotic (58% for CD) than dizygotic twins (4%).

- Disease susceptibility genes, e.g. mutations in the *CARD15 (NOD2)* gene on chromosome 16, confer susceptibility to stricturing small bowel CD.
- Increased incidence of HLA-B27 in IBD with ankylosing spondylitis.

### Environment

- Smoking is associated with a two-fold increased risk for CD. In contrast, current smoking is associated with a reduced risk for developing UC compared with non-smokers.
- Stress and depression may precipitate relapses in IBD.
- Enteric microflora is altered and the intestinal wall is contaminated by adherent and invading bacteria.

**Host immune response** IBD results from a defective mucosal immune system producing an abnormal response to luminal antigens such as bacteria which enter the intestine via a leaky epithelium. In the genetically predisposed individual, there is an exaggerated immune response with effector T cells (T helper (Th)1, Th2 and Th17) predominating over regulatory T cells. Pro-inflammatory cytokines (interleukin (IL)-12, interferon (IFN)- $\gamma$ , IL-5, IL-17) released by these activated T cells stimulate macrophages to produce tumour necrosis factor (TNF)- $\alpha$ , IL-1 and IL-6. There is also activation of other cells (neutrophils, mast cells and eosinophils) that together lead to increased production of a wide variety of inflammatory mediators, all of which can lead to cell damage.

### Pathology

CD and UC have some overlapping clinical and pathological features but also key differences at macroscopic and microscopic levels (Table 3.9).

### Clinical features

**Crohn's disease** Symptoms depend on the region(s) of involved bowel; the commonest site is ileocaecal, in 40% of patients. Small bowel disease causes abdominal pain, usually with weight loss. Less commonly, terminal ileal disease presents as an acute abdomen with right iliac fossa pain mimicking appendicitis. Colonic disease presents with diarrhoea, bleeding and pain related to defecation. In perianal disease there are anal tags, fissures, fistulae (p. 824) and abscess formation.

**Ulcerative colitis** presents with diarrhoea, often containing blood and mucus. The clinical course may be one of persistent diarrhoea, relapses and remissions, or severe fulminant colitis (Table 3.10). Patients with IBD may also have one or more extraintestinal manifestations (Table 3.11).

### Investigations

The purpose of investigations is to establish the diagnosis of IBD with differentiation between CD and UC, to define the extent and severity of bowel

**Table 3.9** Differences between Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis

|                    | Crohn's disease  | Ulcerative colitis   |
|--------------------|--|--|
| <b>Macroscopic</b> | Affects any part of gastrointestinal tract                   | Affects only the colon   |
|                    | Oral and perianal disease                                    | Begins in rectum and extends proximally in varying degrees                                   |
|                    | Discontinuous involvement ('skip lesions')                   | Continuous involvement   |
|                    | Deep ulcers and fissures in mucosa: 'cobblestone appearance' | Red mucosa, bleeds easily<br>Ulcers and pseudopolyps (regenerating mucosa) in severe disease |
| <b>Microscopic</b> | Transmural inflammation                                      | Mucosal inflammation   |
|                    | Granulomas present in 50%                                    | No granulomata   |
|                    |  | Goblet cell depletion  |
| Crypt abscesses    |  |  |

**Table 3.10** Ulcerative colitis severity index

|                                | Mild       | Severe      |
|--------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Bloody diarrhoea               | <4 per day | >6 per day  |
| Fever                          | Absent     | >37.5 °C    |
| Tachycardia                    | Absent     | >90/min     |
| Erythrocyte sedimentation rate | <20 mm/h   | >30 mm/h    |
| Anaemia                        | Absent     | Hb <10 g/dL |
| Serum albumin                  | normal     | <30 g/L     |

*Severe colitis requires bloody diarrhoea plus any one of the systemic features.*

*Moderate colitis lies between these two definitions.*

involvement, identify any extraintestinal manifestations and exclude other diseases that may present similarly.

**Blood tests** Anaemia is common and may be normochromic, normocytic anaemia of chronic disease or due to deficiency of iron, B<sub>12</sub> or folate. The platelet count, erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) and C-reactive protein are often raised in acute CD, and the serum albumin is low in severe disease. Liver biochemistry may be abnormal related to associated liver disease.

### Radiology and imaging

**Rigid or flexible sigmoidoscopy** will establish the diagnosis of UC and CD (if the rectum and/or sigmoid colon is involved). A rectal biopsy is taken for histological examination to determine the nature of the inflammation.

**Table 3.11** Extragastrintestinal manifestations of inflammatory bowel disease

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Eyes  | Uveitis, episcleritis, conjunctivitis  |
| Joints  | Arthralgia*, small joint arthritis, monoarticular arthritis (knees and ankles), ankylosing spondylitis, inflammatory back pain |
| Skin  | Erythema nodosum, pyoderma gangrenosum (necrotizing ulceration of the skin, commonly on lower legs)                            |
| Hepatobiliary   | Fatty liver*, sclerosing cholangitis, chronic hepatitis, cirrhosis, gallstones*  |
| Renal calculi   | Oxalate stones in patients with small bowel disease or after resection   |
| Venous thrombosis   |  |
| <i>All uncommon, occur in less than 10% of patients other than those marked*.</i> |  |

**Colonoscopy** allows the exact extent and severity of colonic and terminal ileal inflammation to be determined, and biopsies to be taken.

**Small bowel imaging** is performed to determine the extent of small bowel involvement with CD. Specific imaging type depends on local expertise and includes small bowel barium follow-through or MR enteroclysis with oral contrast. Affected bowel shows an asymmetrical alteration in the mucosal pattern, with deep ulceration and areas of narrowing ('string sign') commonly confined to the ileum. Skip lesions may be seen. Video capsule endoscopy is increasingly used to detect small bowel disease and is more sensitive than a barium follow-through. It is contraindicated in stricturing disease.

**Perianal CD** is usually assessed by MRI and sometimes by endoanal ultrasound.

**Ultrasonography** is particularly helpful in delineating abdominal and pelvic abscesses, and will show thickened bowel in involved areas. Abdominal CT scanning is also used in patients with suspected abscesses.

**Plain abdominal X-ray** should be performed in all patients admitted to hospital with acute severe colitis. It helps to assess extent of colonic involvement and identifies toxic dilatation of the colon.

**Radiolabelled white cell scanning** is a safe, non-invasive investigation. It helps to identify small bowel and colonic disease but lacks specificity.

## Differential diagnosis

CD must be differentiated from other causes of chronic diarrhoea, malabsorption and malnutrition. In children it is a cause of short stature. Other causes

of terminal ileitis are tuberculosis and *Yersinia enterocolitica* infection (causing an acute illness). IBD affecting the colon must be differentiated from other causes of colitis: infection (p. 32), ischaemia, radiation and microscopic colitis (p. 106).

## Management

**Medical** The aim of treatment is to induce and maintain a remission. Patients with CD who smoke should be advised to stop with help offered to achieve this (p. 513). Therapy for IBD is a rapidly evolving field and new drugs are likely to appear in the next decade. In general the treatments used have many anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressive properties combined with an antibacterial action in some cases (e.g. metronidazole).

Treatment of CD depends on the site and severity of disease, and also if the disease is stricturing or fistulating:

- *Oral 5-ASA* is less efficacious than in UC and is used in mild disease only. It is generally well tolerated. Rare potentially serious side effects are bloody diarrhoea (resembling acute colitis), Stevens–Johnson syndrome, acute pancreatitis and renal impairment.
- *Steroids*: Oral prednisolone (40 mg/day, p. 464) is used for moderate/severe disease. It is reduced gradually according to severity and patient response, generally over 8 weeks. A few patients with severe disease require inpatient admission and intravenous hydrocortisone. Budesonide is a poorly absorbed oral corticosteroid with limited bioavailability and extensive first-pass metabolism that has therapeutic benefit with reduced systemic toxicity in ileocaecal CD.
- *Liquid enteral nutrition* with an elemental (liquid preparation of amino acids, glucose and fatty acids) or polymeric diet induces a remission in active CD. The exact mode of action is not known. These diets are unpalatable and may have to be given via a nasogastric tube.
- *The thiopurine drugs*, azathioprine (2.5 mg/kg/day) or its metabolite 6-mercaptopurine 1.5 mg/kg/day, are used to maintain a remission and are given to patients who require two or more corticosteroid courses per year. Major side-effects are bone marrow suppression (neutropenia, thrombocytopenia and anaemia), acute pancreatitis and allergic reactions. The enzyme, thiopurine methyltransferase (TPMT), is essential in metabolism of thiopurines and activity should be measured on a blood sample before treatment is given. Approximately 1 in 300 patients have absent TPMT activity and will not metabolize the drug. These patients are at high risk for pancytopenia and treatment is contraindicated. About 10% of patients have reduced TPMT activity and a lower drug dose is indicated (half to one third of normal dosing).
- *Metronidazole* is useful in severe perianal CD as a result of both its antibacterial and immunosuppressive action.

- *Methotrexate* (intramuscular) is used in a minority of patients with active CD that is resistant to conventional treatment with steroids. It is also used to maintain a remission in those refractory or intolerant to azathioprine/6-mercaptopurine.
- *Anti-TNF antibodies* (infliximab, adalimumab, certolizumab) are used to induce a remission in patients resistant to corticosteroids/immunosuppressives. Scheduled treatment at 8-weekly intervals is then given to maintain a remission.

Treatment of UC depends on severity (Table 3.10) and distribution of disease (Table 3.12). The management of acute, severe UC is summarized in Emergency Box 3.2.

**Surgery** In CD and UC, surgery is indicated for:

- Failure of medical therapy with acute or chronic symptoms producing ill health
- Complications (Table 3.13)
- Failure to grow in children despite medical treatment.

Resections are kept to a minimum in CD as recurrence is almost inevitable in the remaining bowel. In some patients with small bowel disease, strictures can be widened (stricturoplasty) without resection.

The surgical options in UC are:

- Colectomy with ileoanal anastomosis: the terminal ileum is used to form a reservoir (a 'pouch'), and the patient is continent with a few bowel

**Table 3.12** Summary of treatments used in ulcerative colitis

| Disease severity              | Medication                    | Indications   |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Mild/moderate                 | Oral 5-ASA                    | First line for left sided/extensive                                   |
|                               | Rectal 5-ASA/steroids         | For proctitis or proctosigmoiditis                                    |
|                               | Oral prednisolone             | Second line, if inadequate response to 5-ASA                          |
| Severe                        | Oral prednisolone             |   |
| Severe with systemic features | Hydrocortisone                | See Emergency Box 3.2   |
|                               | Ciclosporin                   |   |
|                               | Infliximab                    |   |
| Maintain remission            | 5-ASA                         | Most patients require maintenance treatment                           |
|                               | Azathioprine/6-mercaptopurine | For patients who relapse frequently despite ASA or are ASA-intolerant |

*5-ASA, aminosalicylic acid; left sided disease, up to splenic flexure; proctitis, rectal inflammation.*

## Emergency Box 3.2

### Management of acute severe colitis

Admit to hospital

- Joint inpatient management between gastroenterologist and colorectal surgeon

Investigations

- FBC, CRP, liver biochemistry, serum albumin and electrolytes
- Blood cultures (Gram-negative sepsis occurs)
- Plain abdominal X-ray looking for colonic dilatation (transverse colon diameter >5 cm), and mucosal islands
- Stool cultures ( $\times 3$ ) and *Cl. difficile* toxin to exclude coincidental infection (do not delay steroids while awaiting result)

Treatment

- Stop drugs that may precipitate colonic dilatation (anticholinergics, anti-diarrhoeals, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, opioids)
- i.v. hydrocortisone 100 mg 6-hourly
- Correct electrolyte and fluid imbalance
- Low molecular weight heparin to reduce the risk of venous thrombosis
- Consider i.v. ciclosporin (2 mg/kg over 24 hours) or infliximab if no response after 4 days of i.v. hydrocortisone. Colectomy may be necessary.

Monitor

- Stool chart: frequency, type and presence of blood
- Vital signs at least four times daily
- Daily bloods and abdominal X-ray if admitting film abnormal

**Table 3.13** Complications of inflammatory bowel disease

Toxic dilatation of the colon + perforation  
 Stricture formation\*  
 Abscess formation (Crohn's disease)  
 Fistulae and fissures (Crohn's)\*  
 Colon cancer

*\*Surgical intervention only necessary if symptomatic and not responding to medical treatment.*

motions per day. The pouch may become inflamed ('pouchitis'), leading to bloody diarrhoea which is treated initially with metronidazole. Probiotics (live microorganisms that modify composition of enteric bacteria) are sometimes used to prevent and treat pouchitis.

- Panproctocolectomy with ileostomy: the whole colon and rectum are removed and the ileum brought out on to the abdominal wall as a stoma.

## Cancer in inflammatory bowel disease

Extensive UC and Crohn's colitis of more than 10 years' duration is associated with an increased risk of colorectal cancer (CRC, cumulative risk 12% after 25 years). Patients with colitis should undergo colonoscopy at 10 years from diagnosis and an assessment of cancer risk is made. High risk patients (extensive colitis with moderate/severe activity, primary sclerosing cholangitis or family history of CRC in first degree relative <50 years) are offered a further colonoscopy and multiple colonic biopsies (to look for dysplasia) one year later. Lower risk patients undergo colonoscopy 3–5 years later. Colectomy is recommended if high grade dysplasia is discovered and increased surveillance (6–12 monthly) with low-grade dysplasia.

## Prognosis

Both diseases are characterized by relapses and remissions. Almost all patients with CD have a significant relapse over a 20-year period. The prognosis of UC is variable. Only 10% of patients with proctitis develop more extensive disease, but with severe fulminant disease there is a risk of colonic perforation and death.

## Microscopic colitis

The colonic mucosa looks normal at endoscopy but histological examination of mucosal biopsies shows lamina propria inflammation and increased intraepithelial lymphocytes in *lymphocytic colitis* and thickening of the sub-epithelial collagen layer in *collagenous colitis*. Presentation is most commonly with chronic, watery diarrhoea in a middle-aged or elderly person. Microscopic colitis can be drug induced, e.g. NSAIDs, and occurs with increased frequency in coeliac disease. Treatment is symptomatic initially with anti-diarrhoeal drugs such as loperamide. Budesonide is the first-line therapy for both induction and maintenance of response in patients not controlled with symptomatic treatment. Aminosalicylates, bismuth subsalicylate, colestyramine and systemic steroids are used in resistant cases. Microscopic colitis does not progress to overt inflammatory bowel disease.

## THE COLON AND RECTUM

The main role of the colon is absorption of water and electrolytes and propulsion of contents from the caecum to the anorectal region. About 9000 mL of water containing electrolytes enters the gastrointestinal tract each day; the majority from gastrointestinal secretions (stomach, pancreas, bile, intestinal secretion) and only a small amount from the diet. Most is absorbed in the



small intestine and only about 1500 mL passes through the ileocaecal valve into the colon, of which about 1350 mL is normally absorbed.

## Constipation

This is a common problem in the general population, particularly in the elderly (associated with immobility and poor diet), and in young women (associated with slow colonic transit or post-partum pelvic floor abnormalities). Constipation is a consistent difficulty in defecation. Specific definitions are infrequent passage of stools (<3/week), straining, passage of hard stools, incomplete evacuation and sensation of anorectal blockage. There is a long list of possible causes (Table 3.14) but in many patients it is their perception that there is an abnormality and requires no more than dietary advice and reassurance. In many patients it is part of the irritable bowel syndrome (p. 117).

## Investigation

Initial evaluation is with a history and physical examination, including a rectal examination during which the patient is asked to strain. A patient with a defecatory disorder has paradoxical contraction rather than the normal relaxation of the puborectalis and external anal sphincter during straining, which may prevent defecation.

Routine blood tests, radiography and endoscopy are not usually indicated in the evaluation of patients with constipation without alarm symptoms; the latter includes rectal bleeding, anaemia or recent onset of constipation in the

**Table 3.14** Causes of constipation

### General

Pregnancy, inadequate fibre intake, immobility

### Metabolic/endocrine

Diabetes mellitus, hypothyroidism, hypercalcaemia, porphyria

### Functional

Irritable bowel syndrome, idiopathic slow transit

### Drugs

Opiates, antimuscarinics, calcium channel blockers e.g. verapamil, Antidepressants, e.g. tricyclics, iron

### Neurological

Spinal cord lesions, Parkinson's disease

### Psychological

Depression, anorexia nervosa, depressed urge to defecate

### Gastrointestinal disease

Intestinal obstruction (e.g. by colon cancer) and pseudo-obstruction  
Painful anal conditions, Hirschsprung's disease

### Defecatory disorders

Rectal prolapse, pelvic floor dyssynergia  
Megarectum, large rectocele

middle aged or elderly (>50 years) particularly if associated with a sense of incomplete evacuation.

A few patients with no obvious underlying cause (idiopathic constipation) may require studies of colonic transit (measured using radiopaque markers taken orally) and anorectal physiology to determine if they have normal colonic transit, slow transit, or a defecatory disorder.

## Management

Any underlying cause should be corrected. Patients with normal and slow transit constipation are treated with a high-fibre diet together with plenty of liquids. Long-term laxatives are only used in severe and unresponsive cases (p. 130). A wide variety of laxatives are available but many patients are not satisfied with their treatments. New therapeutic approaches are opioid antagonists for the treatment of opiate-induced constipation, neurotrophins, chloride channel activators which stimulate intestinal fluid secretion and selective serotonin receptor (5-HT<sub>4</sub>-receptor) agonists which regulate gut motility and intestinal secretion. Patients with defecatory disorders may require referral to a specialist centre.

## Faecal incontinence

This is recurrent uncontrolled passage of flatus and/or stool. Continence depends on a number of factors including mental function, stool volume and consistency, structural and functional integrity of the anal sphincters, puborectalis muscle, pudendal nerve function, rectal distensibility and anorectal sensation. Faecal impaction is a common cause of faecal incontinence in the elderly (overflow diarrhoea). Anal sphincter tears or trauma to the pudendal nerve can occur after childbirth or anal surgery (e.g. for haemorrhoids). Impaired rectal sensation occurs with diabetes mellitus, multiple sclerosis, dementia and spinal cord injuries. A detailed history and examination with digital rectal examination will help diagnose and exclude most common causes. Specific investigations include sigmoidoscopy to exclude mucosal disease, imaging of the anal sphincters (by anal endosonography, or MRI), anorectal manometry (to assess anal sphincter pressures), and sensory testing by rectal balloon distension to assess rectal sensation and compliance. Treatment depends on the cause.

## Diverticular disease

Pouches of mucosa extrude through the colonic muscular wall via weakened areas near blood vessels to form diverticula. The term *diverticulosis* means the presence of diverticula. *Diverticulitis* implies inflammation, which occurs when faeces obstruct the neck of the diverticulum. Diverticula are common, affecting 50% of the population over 50 years of age.

## Aetiology

The precise cause of diverticular disease is unknown, although it appears to be related to the low-fibre diet eaten in Western populations; insufficient dietary fibre leads to increased intracolonic pressure, which causes herniation of the mucosa at sites of weakness.

## Clinical features

It is asymptomatic in 95% and usually discovered incidentally when a barium enema or colonoscopy is performed for other reasons. Symptoms are the result of luminal narrowing (causing pain and constipation), bleeding which may be massive, or diverticulitis. The latter present with left iliac fossa pain, fever and nausea and may result in perforation (leading to abscess formation or peritonitis), fistula formation into the bladder or vagina, or intestinal obstruction. Acute diverticulitis is diagnosed by CT scan or in some cases by ultrasound.

## Management

Acute attacks are treated with antibiotics (cephalosporin and metronidazole). Surgery is indicated rarely for complications and for frequent attacks of diverticulitis.

## Miscellaneous conditions

### Megacolon

This term describes a number of conditions in which the colon is dilated. The most common cause is chronic constipation. Other causes are Chagas' disease (p. 821) and Hirschsprung's disease (congenital aganglionic segment in the rectum). Treatment is with laxatives, although Hirschsprung's disease responds to surgical resection.

### Ischaemic colitis

Blood supply to the colon is from the superior and inferior mesenteric arteries. Watershed areas in the splenic flexure and caecum are most susceptible to ischaemia. Ischaemic colitis is most common in the elderly and related to underlying atherosclerosis and vessel occlusion. It also occurs in a younger population associated with use of contraceptives, thrombophilia (p. 229) and vasculitis (p. 306). Presentation is with abdominal pain and rectal bleeding, and occasionally shock. Sigmoidoscopy is often normal apart from blood. Treatment is symptomatic, although surgery may be required for gangrene, perforation or stricture formation.

## Colon polyps and the polyposis syndromes

A polyp is an abnormal growth of tissue projecting into the intestinal lumen from the normally flat mucosal surface. Polyps may be single or multiple and are usually asymptomatic. Most polyps in the colon are adenomas, which are the precursor lesions of most colorectal cancer (CRC). Other types are hyperplastic, inflammatory (in patients with IBD) and hamartomatous, of which only the latter carry a malignant potential.

**Adenomatous polyps** These are tumours of benign neoplastic epithelium and are more common with increasing age. The aetiology is unknown, although genetic and environmental factors are implicated. They rarely produce symptoms, although large polyps can bleed and cause anaemia, and large villous adenomas can occasionally present with diarrhoea and hypokalaemia. Although most adenomas do not become malignant during the patient's lifetime they are removed at endoscopy to reduce the risk of developing CRC. The risk of malignant change in a polyp increases with:

- Size >1 cm
- Sessile polyps (base attached to colon wall) > pedunculated polyps (mucosal stalk is interposed between polyp and colon wall)
- Severe dysplasia > mild dysplasia
- Villous histology > tubular
- Polyp number: multiple > single.

About 5% of CRCs occur on a background of a genetic syndrome associated with colonic polyps and an increased risk of colon cancer (Table 3.15). A family history suggestive of one of these syndromes may lower the threshold for investigation in a patient presenting with gastrointestinal symptoms. In addition, referral for genetic testing may be appropriate in a patient with colon polyps or cancer when one of these syndromes is suspected (e.g. young age at diagnosis <50 years, affected family members, other associated cancers).

## Colorectal cancer

Most colorectal cancers occur sporadically. Family colon cancer syndromes (Table 3.15) or cancers occurring on a background of longstanding colitis (p. 106) account for a small percentage.

### Epidemiology

CRC is the third most common cancer world-wide and the second most common cause of cancer deaths in the UK. Increasing age is the greatest risk factor and the average age at diagnosis is 60–65 years. Family history, next to age, is the most significant risk factor. In the West, the lifetime risk of CRC is 1 in 50, increasing to 1 in 17 in those with one affected first-degree relative and greatly increased in the family cancer syndromes (Table 3.15).

**Table 3.15** The family colon cancer syndromes

| Name                                 | Mutated gene (s)          | Description  | Cancer risk   |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|---|
| HNPCC (Lynch's syndrome)             | DNA mismatch repair genes | Accelerated progression from adenoma to CRC. Increased risk several extracolonic malignancies; endometrial is commonest.   | Over half develop CRC, onset in fourth decade   |
| Familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) | <i>APC</i> gene           | Numerous colorectal polyps (>100) develop in teenage years<br>Increased risk of extracolonic malignancies. FAP variants are Turcot's (with brain tumours), Gardner's (with desmoid tumours, skull osteomas) and attenuated FAP (fewer polyps at a later age) | 100% lifetime risk of CRC, onset in young adults  |
| MYH-associated polyposis             | Base-excision repair gene | Multiple polyps (>15) at a young age (<50 years)   | Increased risk of CRC, onset in fourth decade   |
| Peutz–Jeghers syndrome               | <i>STK-11</i>             | Numerous pigmented spots on lips and buccal mucosa. Multiple hamartomas, polyps. Small intestinal polyps may bleed, obstruct or cause intussusception.   | Increased risk of non-gastrointestinal and gastrointestinal cancer (through adenomatous change in polyps) |

*All are autosomal dominant inheritance, other than MYH-associated polyposis. HNPCC, hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer; CRC, colorectal cancer.*

Colon cancer is rare in Africa and Asia, largely because of environmental differences. A diet high in meat and animal fat and low in fibre is thought to be one aetiological factor.

## Inheritance

In sporadic CRC, a stepwise accumulation of abnormalities in a number of critical growth regulating genes drives the progression from normal mucosa to adenoma to invasive cancer. These include the activation of tumour-promoting genes or oncogenes, e.g. *K-ras* and the inactivation of tumour suppressor genes.

## Pathology

Spread is by direct invasion through the bowel wall, with later invasion of blood vessels and lymphatics and spread to the liver and lung. Mortality of CRC is related to the TNM stage at presentation (Table 3.16). Synchronous (i.e. more than one) tumours are present in 2% of cases.

## Clinical features

Most tumours are in the left side of the colon. They cause rectal bleeding and stenosis, with symptoms of increasing intestinal obstruction such as an alteration in bowel habit and colicky abdominal pain. Carcinoma of the caecum and ascending colon often present with iron deficiency anaemia or a right iliac fossa mass. Clinical examination is usually unhelpful, although a

**Table 3.16** TNM staging of colon cancer

| TNM stage  | Description  | 5-year survival (%) |
|------------|--|---------------------|
| Stage 0    | Tumour confined to the mucosa  | >95                 |
| Stage 1    | Tumour invades submucosa (T1) or muscularis propria (T2). No involved nodes (N0) or distant metastases (M0)              | 80–95               |
| Stage II   | Tumour invades into subserosa (T3) or directly into other organs (T4). No involved nodes (N0) or distant metastases (M0) | 65–85               |
| Stage IIIa | T1/T2 and 1–3 regional lymph nodes involved (N1).  | 55–65               |
| Stage IIIb | T3, N1 or T4, N1   | 35–42               |
| Stage IIIc | Any T, ≥4 regional lymph nodes (N2)  | 25–27               |
| Stage 4    | Any T, any N + distant metastases  | 5–7                 |

mass may be palpable transabdominally or in the rectum. Hepatomegaly may be present with liver metastases.

## Investigation

The purpose of investigation is to confirm the diagnosis and stage the tumour.

**Colonic examination** with colonoscopy, CT colonography or barium enema are all used to examine the colon in suspected CRC but colonoscopy and biopsy of lesions remains the gold standard.

**Blood tests** A full blood count may show anaemia, and abnormal serum liver biochemistry suggests the presence of liver secondaries. Serum levels of the tumour marker carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA) are often raised in CRC but are used in follow-up (rising levels suggest recurrence) rather than diagnosis.

**Radiology** CT scan of the chest, abdomen and pelvis is the initial staging investigation to look for local spread and metastatic disease. PET scanning is often used for evaluation of suspicious lesions found on CT. MRI and endoanal ultrasound are used to locally stage rectal cancer.

**Faecal occult blood tests** are used in population screening studies (see below) but are not of value diagnostically.

## Management

Treatment is surgical, with tumour resection and end-to-end anastomosis of bowel if possible. In very low rectal cancers abdominoperineal resection with permanent end colostomy is necessary. Post-operative (adjuvant) chemotherapy increases survival in stage III and selected stage II tumours. Pre-operative radiotherapy improves survival in some patients with rectal cancer, and radiotherapy can also offer effective palliation in patients with locally advanced disease. Patients with up to two or three liver metastases confined to one lobe of the liver may be offered hepatic resection. Patients with unresectable metastatic disease are commonly offered palliative chemotherapy, which increases median survival and improves quality of life.

## Prognosis

This is related to tumour stage at presentation (Table 3.16).

## Screening

High-risk individuals e.g. from family colon cancer syndromes or with a first-degree relative developing colon cancer aged <45 years are offered screening colonoscopy. Many countries now have population screening programmes to detect early-stage cancer and hence improve outcome. In the UK, screening with biannual faecal occult blood tests (with colonoscopy when positive) for individuals 60–69 years is predicted to reduce CRC mortality by 16%.

## DIARRHOEA

Diarrhoea is a common complaint in clinical practice.

**Acute diarrhoea** This is usually due to infection or dietary indiscretion. Traveller's diarrhoea is discussed on page 35. Stool cultures ( $\times 3$  for ova, parasites and cysts) are sent and a flexible sigmoidoscopy with colonic biopsy is then performed if symptoms persist and no diagnosis has been made. Treatment is symptomatic to maintain hydration, with antidiarrhoeal agents (p. 133) for short-term relief and antibiotics for specific indications (p. 35).

**Chronic diarrhoea** This is defined as diarrhoea persisting for more than 14 days. Organic causes (resulting in stool weights  $>250\text{g}$ ) have to be distinguished from functional causes (frequent passage of small volume stools with stool weights  $<250\text{g}$ , p. 117) which can usually be done from the history (p. 115). Sometimes faecal markers of intestinal inflammation are used to differentiate functional disorders from organic disease (p. 67).

## Mechanisms of diarrhoea

### Osmotic diarrhoea

Large quantities of non-absorbed hypertonic substances in the bowel lumen draw fluid into the intestine. The diarrhoea stops when the patient stops eating or the malabsorptive substance is discontinued. The causes of osmotic diarrhoea are as follows:

- Ingestion of non-absorbable substance, e.g. a laxative such as magnesium sulphate
- Generalized malabsorption so that high concentrations of solute (e.g. glucose) remain in the lumen
- Specific malabsorptive defect, e.g. disaccharidase deficiency.

### Secretory diarrhoea

There is active intestinal secretion of fluid and electrolytes as well as decreased absorption. Secretory diarrhoea continues when the patient fasts. The causes are:

- Enterotoxins, e.g. from *Escherichia coli*, cholera toxin
- Hormone-secreting tumours, e.g. VIPoma (p. 191)
- Bile salts (in the colon) following ileal disease, resection or idiopathic bile acid malabsorption
- Fatty acids (in the colon) following ileal resection
- Some laxatives.

### Inflammatory diarrhoea (mucosal destruction)

Damage to the intestinal mucosal cell leads to loss of fluid and blood and defective absorption of fluid and electrolytes. Common causes are infective (e.g. *Shigella*, salmonella) and inflammatory conditions (e.g. UC and CD).



## Motility related

Abnormal motility often produces frequency rather than true diarrhoea. Causes are thyrotoxicosis, diabetic autonomic neuropathy and post-vagotomy.

### Approach to the patient with diarrhoea

An assessment of the likely cause of diarrhoea is initially made on the history:

**Step 1:** Determine if the diarrhoea is likely to have an organic or functional basis (p. 117). Frequent passage of small-volume stools (often formed) points to a functional cause; the exceptions are distal colon cancer and proctitis – organic causes that present with stool frequency and normal stool volumes. Symptoms suggestive of an organic cause include large-volume watery stools, nocturnal diarrhoea, bloody stools, weight loss or a stool description suggesting steatorrhoea (p. 67).

**Step 2:** Distinguish malabsorptive from colonic/inflammatory forms of diarrhoea. Colonic, inflammatory and secretory (see below) causes of diarrhoea typically present with loose liquid or watery stools. Inflammatory diarrhoea is associated with blood or mucous discharge. Malabsorption is often accompanied by steatorrhoea (p. 67).

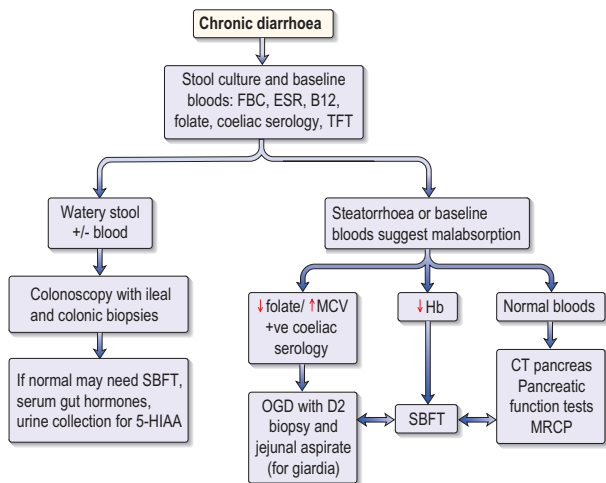
**Step 3:** Rarely, measurement of stool weight by a 3-day stool collection as a hospital inpatient may be necessary where differentiation between organic and functional bowel disease is difficult. Occasionally diarrhoea is factitious due to surreptitious laxative ingestion, or the patient deliberately dilutes the faeces by adding water or urine.

## Investigation

**Chronic diarrhoea** of likely organic origin always requires investigation. Fig. 3.4 outlines an approach to investigation. Laxative abuse, usually seen in young females, must be excluded as a cause. Patients taking anthraquinone purgatives, e.g. senna, develop pigmentation of the colonic mucosa (melanosis coli) which may be seen at sigmoidoscopy. Other laxatives may be detected in the stool or urine. Treatment of chronic diarrhoea depends on the cause.

### FUNCTIONAL BOWEL DISORDERS

This is a large group of gastrointestinal disorders that are termed ‘functional’ because symptoms occur in the absence of any demonstrable abnormalities in the digestion and absorption of nutrients, fluid and electrolytes, and no structural abnormality can be identified in the gastrointestinal tract. Functional bowel disorders are extremely common world-wide, accounting for up to 80% of patients seen in the gastroenterology clinic. Rather than a diagnosis of exclusion after normal investigations (as the definition would suggest), this



- Patients with presumed functional diarrhoea, based on history, age and normal baseline investigations (FBC, ESR, coeliac serology) are excluded from this algorithm.
- High-risk patients (immunosuppressed, recent travel or antibiotics) should have multiple stool cultures including a search for unusual organisms.

**Fig. 3.4** Approach to the investigation of chronic diarrhoea. FBC, full blood count; ESR, erythrocyte sedimentation rate; TFT, thyroid function test; SBFT, small bowel follow-through; HIAA, hydroxyindoleacetic acid; MCV, mean corpuscular volume; OGD, oesophagogastroduodenoscopy; MRCP, magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography.

is frequently a positive diagnosis made in a patient with symptoms suggestive of a functional gastrointestinal disorder (Table 3.17). It is estimated that only 25% of persons with this condition seek medical care for it, and studies suggest that those who seek care are more likely to have behavioural and psychiatric problems than those who do not seek care.

Altered bowel motility, visceral hypersensitivity (they have a lower pain threshold when tested with balloon distension of the rectum), psychosocial factors, an imbalance in neurotransmitters and gastrointestinal infection have all been proposed as playing a part in the development of functional bowel disorders. Low-dose antidepressant treatment e.g. amitriptyline 10 mg daily, is frequently used for these disorders if initial symptom-based treatments do not prove beneficial. Common functional gastrointestinal disorders are listed below.

- *Functional oesophageal disorders* occur in the absence of dysphagia, pathological gastrooesophageal reflux disease or other oesophageal disorder. They include globus (a sensation of a lump in the throat persisting

**Table 3.17** Chronic gastrointestinal symptoms suggestive of a functional gastrointestinal disorder

|  |
|--|
| Nausea alone   |
| Vomiting alone   |
| Belching   |
| Chest pain unrelated to exercise                               |
| Postprandial fullness  |
| Abdominal bloating   |
| Abdominal discomfort/pain (right or left iliac fossa)          |
| Passage of mucus per rectum                                    |
| Frequent bowel actions with urgency first thing in the morning |

between meals), regurgitation and midline chest pain. Sometimes these symptoms will respond to high-dose acid suppression or antidepressants e.g. amitriptyline or citalopram.

- **Functional dyspepsia.** Common symptoms include epigastric pain or discomfort, early satiety, bloating and nausea. Symptoms are sometimes similar to peptic ulceration. Investigation is frequently unnecessary in younger people (<55 years) but endoscopy is usually required in older people or in those with 'alarm symptoms' (for management of dyspepsia, see p. 84). Management is mainly by reassurance and lifestyle changes (reducing intake of fat, coffee, alcohol and cigarette smoking). PPIs help some patients with epigastric pain. Prokinetic agents e.g. metoclopramide and domperidone (p. 136) are sometimes helpful, particularly in those with fullness and bloating. Eradication of *H. pylori* is helpful in some patients.
- **Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).** Crampy abdominal pain relieved by defecation or the passage of wind, altered bowel habit, a sensation of incomplete evacuation, abdominal bloating and distension are common symptoms. Subtypes of IBS can be identified according to the predominant stool pattern: IBS with constipation, IBS with diarrhoea, and mixed IBS with alternating diarrhoea and constipation. In other patients with IBS, diarrhoea without pain (formed stools followed by loose mushy stools mainly in the morning) or abdominal pain without alteration in bowel habit are the major symptoms.

Symptoms are more common in women than men, and the history is usually prolonged. Characteristically the patient looks healthy. Examination is usually normal, although sigmoidoscopy and air insufflation may reproduce the pain. If frequency of defecation is a feature, a rectal biopsy should be performed to exclude IBD. Investigation depends on the individual patient. Young patients with classic symptoms need only simple blood tests (full blood count, C-reactive protein and coeliac serology) to look for evidence of other

gastrointestinal diseases that present similarly, e.g. IBD and coeliac disease. Onset of symptoms in an older patient (>50 years) should be investigated further, e.g. colonoscopy, to exclude other pathology. The approach to investigating a patient presenting with constipation or diarrhoea is discussed on pages 107 and 115, respectively. Management is reassurance, with a discussion of lifestyle and diet. Initial treatment is symptom based with soluble fibre supplements for constipation, e.g. ispaghula husk (p. 130) and antidiarrhoeal drugs e.g. loperamide (p. 133) for bowel frequency. Smooth muscle relaxants, such as peppermint oil and mebeverine, are useful in some patients with abdominal pain. Second-line treatment is with low-dose amitriptyline or citalopram. Psychological interventions (hypnotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy and psychotherapy) are used for patients with resistant symptoms.

## THE ACUTE ABDOMEN

This section deals with acute abdominal conditions that cause patients to be hospitalized within a few hours of the onset of their pain. Most are admitted under the care of the surgical team, and some will need a laparotomy. Medical conditions that present as an acute abdomen include diabetic ketoacidosis, myocardial infarction and pneumonia. IBS occasionally presents with acute severe abdominal pain. A leaking abdominal aortic aneurysm may present similarly to renal colic and should be considered in the over 50s presenting with apparent colic. Mesenteric ischaemia is easily missed and should be considered in a patient presenting with abdominal pain and prior weight loss. A plain abdominal X-ray and erect chest X-ray is usually performed in the acute abdomen but the most useful imaging investigations are ultrasound (for cholangitis, cholecystitis, appendicitis, gynaecological conditions) and CT (site and cause of intestinal obstruction, renal colic, acute pancreatitis).

### History

The history, including gynaecological (vaginal discharge, last menstrual period) and urinary symptoms, will often point to the cause of the pain.

- *Onset* of pain may be sudden or gradual. Sudden onset suggests perforation of a viscus (e.g. duodenal ulcer), rupture of an organ (e.g. aortic aneurysm) or torsion (e.g. ovarian cyst). The pain of acute pancreatitis often begins suddenly. Ruptured ectopic pregnancy, rupture or torsion of ovarian cysts and acute salpingitis cause lower abdominal pain in women.
- *Site* of pain and radiation must be noted. In general, upper abdominal pain is produced by pathology of either the upper abdominal viscera – e.g. acute cholecystitis, acute pancreatitis – or the stomach and duodenum. The pain of small bowel obstruction is often in the centre of the abdomen. A common cause of acute right iliac fossa pain is acute appendicitis. Pain

**Table 3.18** Some causes of mechanical intestinal obstruction**Small intestinal obstruction**

Adhesions (80% in adults)  
 Hernias  
 Crohn's disease  
 Intussusception  
 Obstruction due to extrinsic involvement by cancer

**Colonic obstruction**

Carcinoma of the colon  
 Sigmoid volvulus  
 Diverticular disease

from acute pancreatitis, rupture of an aortic aneurysm or renal tract disease often radiates to the back.

- *Pain may be intermittent or continuous.* Intermittent (colicky) pain describes pain that occurs for a short period (usually a few minutes) and is interspersed with pain-free periods lasting a few minutes or up to half an hour. This is characteristic of mechanical obstruction of a hollow viscus, e.g. ureteric calculus or bowel obstruction (Table 3.18). Additional symptoms of bowel obstruction, which may or may not be present, are abdominal distension, vomiting and absolute constipation (i.e. failure to pass flatus or stool). Biliary pain (previously called biliary colic) resulting from obstruction of the gall bladder or bile duct is not colicky but usually a constant upper abdominal pain.
- *Continuous pain* is relentless with no periods of complete relief. It occurs in many abdominal conditions.

## Examination

- The presence of shock (pale, cool peripheries, tachycardia, hypotension) suggests rupture of an organ, e.g. aortic aneurysm, ruptured ectopic pregnancy. It also occurs in the later stages of generalized peritonitis resulting from bowel perforation (see below).
- Fever is common in acute inflammatory conditions.
- The signs of peritonitis are tenderness, guarding (involuntary contraction of the abdominal muscles when the abdomen is palpated) and rigidity on palpation. Bowel sounds are absent with generalized peritonitis.
- Mechanical bowel obstruction produces distension and active 'tinkling' bowel sounds. A strangulated hernia may produce obstruction, and the hernial orifices must always be examined.

A rectal and pelvic examination should be performed in most patients with an acute abdomen.

## Investigations

- Blood tests. The white cell count is raised in inflammatory conditions. The serum amylase is raised in any acute abdomen, but levels greater than five times normal indicate acute pancreatitis.
- Urinalysis may show evidence of infection or blood in renal colic. Women of childbearing age should have a pregnancy test.
- Imaging. An erect chest X-ray may show air under the diaphragm with a perforated viscus, but its absence does not exclude perforation. Plain abdominal X-ray shows dilated loops of bowel and fluid levels in obstruction. Ultrasound examination is useful in the diagnosis of acute cholecystitis, cholangitis, appendicitis and gynaecological conditions such as ruptured ovarian cyst and ectopic pregnancy. Spiral CT scan is the most accurate modality in the investigation of the acute abdomen but is usually reserved for patients with inconclusive or negative ultrasound results.
- Surgery. Laparoscopy or laparotomy may be necessary depending on the diagnosis.

## Acute appendicitis

Acute appendicitis occurs when the lumen of the appendix becomes obstructed by a faecolith.

## Epidemiology

It affects all age groups but is rare in the very young and very old.

## Clinical features

The typical clinical presentation is the onset of central abdominal pain which then becomes localized to the right iliac fossa (RIF), accompanied by anorexia and sometimes vomiting and diarrhoea. The patient is pyrexial, with tenderness and guarding in the RIF due to localized peritonitis. There may be a tender mass in the presence of an appendix abscess.

## Investigations

The white cell count, C-reactive protein and ESR are raised, but these are not specific. Ultrasonography may show an inflamed appendix and can also show an appendix mass. CT is highly sensitive and specific, and has reduced removal of histologically normal appendices by 90%.

## Differential diagnosis

Non-specific mesenteric lymphadenitis, terminal ileitis due to Crohn's disease or *Yersinia* infection, acute salpingitis in women, inflamed Meckel's diverticulum and functional bowel disease can all mimic acute appendicitis.

## Management

The treatment is surgical, with removal of the appendix either by open surgery or laparoscopically. An appendix mass is treated conservatively initially with intravenous fluids and antibiotics and later appendicectomy.

## Complications

These arise from gangrene and perforation, leading to localized abscess formation or generalized peritonitis.

### Acute peritonitis

**Localized peritonitis** occurs with all acute inflammatory conditions of the gastrointestinal tract, and management depends on the underlying condition, e.g. acute appendicitis, acute cholecystitis.

**Generalized peritonitis** occurs as a result of rupture of an abdominal viscus, e.g. perforated duodenal ulcer, perforated appendix. There is a sudden onset of abdominal pain which rapidly becomes generalized. The patient is shocked and lies still, as movement exacerbates the pain. A plain abdominal X-ray may show air under the diaphragm; serum amylase must be checked to exclude acute pancreatitis.

### Intestinal obstruction

Intestinal obstruction is either mechanical or functional.

**Mechanical** (Table 3.18) The bowel above the level of the obstruction is dilated, with increased secretion of fluid into the lumen. The patient complains of colicky abdominal pain, associated with vomiting (occurs earlier with small bowel than large bowel obstruction) and absolute constipation (occurs earlier with large bowel than small bowel obstruction). On examination there is distension and 'tinkling' bowel sounds. Small bowel obstruction may settle with conservative management (i.e. nasogastric suction and intravenous fluids to maintain hydration). Large bowel obstruction is treated surgically.

**Functional** This occurs with a paralytic ileus, which is often seen in the post-operative stage of peritonitis or of major abdominal surgery, or in association with opiate treatment (acute colonic pseudo-obstruction, Ogilvie's syndrome). It also occurs when the nerves or muscles of the intestine are damaged, causing intestinal pseudo-obstruction. Unlike mechanical obstruction, pain is often not present and bowel sounds may be decreased. Gas is seen throughout the bowel on a plain abdominal X-ray. Management is conservative.

## THE PERITONEUM

The peritoneal cavity is a closed sac lined by mesothelium. It contains a little fluid to allow the abdominal contents to move freely. Conditions which affect the peritoneum are:

- Infective (peritonitis)
  - Secondary to gut disease, e.g. appendicitis, perforation
  - Chronic peritoneal dialysis
  - Spontaneous (associated with cirrhotic ascites)
  - Tuberculous
- Neoplasia
  - Secondary deposits, e.g. from ovary
  - Primary mesothelioma
- Vasculitis: connective tissue disease.

## NUTRITION

### Dietary requirements

Food is necessary to provide the body with energy. The average daily requirement (Table 3.19) of a middle-aged adult female in the UK is 8100 kJ (1940 kcal), and for a man is 10 600 kJ (2550 kcal). This is made up of 50% carbohydrate, 35% fat and 15% protein, plus or minus 5% alcohol. Energy requirements increase during periods of rapid growth, such as adolescence, pregnancy and lactation, and with sepsis.

Bodyweight is maintained at a 'set point' by a precise balance of energy intake and total energy expenditure (the sum of the resting or basal metabolic rate, physical activity, and the thermic effect of food eaten). Weight gain is almost always due solely to an increase in energy intake which exceeds the total energy expenditure. Occasionally weight gain is due to a decrease in energy expenditure, e.g. hypothyroidism, or due to fluid retention, e.g. heart

**Table 3.19** Protein, energy and water requirement of normal and hypercatabolic adults

| Metabolic state  | Nutritional requirements |                |
|------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
|                  | Normal                   | Hypercatabolic |
| Protein (g/kg)   | 1                        | 2–3            |
| Nitrogen (g/kg)  | 0.17                     | 0.3–0.45       |
| Energy (kcal/kg) | 25–30                    | 35–50          |
| Water (mL/kg)    | 30–35                    | 30–35          |



failure or ascites. On the other hand, weight loss associated with cancer and chronic diseases is due to a reduction in energy intake secondary to a loss of appetite (anorexia). In a few conditions, such as sepsis and severe trauma, there is an increase in energy requirements (hypercatabolic or hypermetabolic) which will result in a negative energy balance if there is no compensatory increase in energy intake.

A balanced diet also requires sufficient amounts of minerals and vitamins. In the Western world vitamin deficiency is rare except in specific groups, e.g. alcohol dependent and patients with small bowel disease, who may have multiple vitamin deficiencies, and patients with liver and biliary tract disease, who are susceptible to deficiency of the fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K). Deficiencies of the B vitamins, riboflavin and biotin, are rare in all patient groups and are not discussed further. Dietary deficiency of vitamin B<sub>6</sub> (pyridoxine, pyridoxal and pyridoxamine) is also extremely rare, but drugs (e.g. isoniazid and penicillamine) that interact with pyridoxal phosphate may cause B<sub>6</sub> deficiency and a polyneuropathy. Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> and folate deficiency are discussed on pages 199 and 201, respectively, and vitamin D deficiency on page 315.

## NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT

Patients should be screened for nutritional status on admission to hospital and during their hospital stay. Current recommendations suggest that:

- Patients should be asked simple questions about recent weight loss, their usual weight and whether they have been eating less than usual.
- Their weight and height should be recorded and body mass index (BMI) calculated (weight [kg]/height [m]<sup>2</sup>). The acceptable range of BMI is 20–25 kg/m<sup>2</sup> for men and 19–24 kg/m<sup>2</sup> for women.

Some form of nutritional supplementation is required in those patients who cannot eat, should not eat, will not eat or cannot eat enough. It is necessary to provide nutritional support for:

- All severely malnourished patients on admission to hospital: severe malnutrition is indicated by a BMI of less than 15 kg/m<sup>2</sup>
- Moderately malnourished patients (BMI 15–19 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) who, because of their physical illness, are not expected to eat for 3–5 days
- Normally nourished patients not expected to eat for 7–10 days.

Enteral nutrition is cheaper, more physiological and has fewer complications than parenteral (intravenous) nutrition, and should be used if the gastrointestinal tract is functioning normally. With both enteral and parenteral nutrition a complete feeding regimen consisting of fat, carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, minerals and trace elements can provide the nutritional requirements of the individual (Table 3.17). Ideally a multidisciplinary nutrition support team should supervise the provision of artificial nutritional support.

## Enteral nutrition

Foods can be given by:

- Mouth
- Fine-bore nasogastric tube for short-term enteral nutrition
- Percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG): this is useful for patients who need feeding for longer than 2 weeks
- Percutaneous jejunostomy where a tube is inserted directly into the jejunum either endoscopically or at laparotomy.

A polymeric diet with whole protein, carbohydrate and fat is usually used; sometimes an elemental diet composed of amino acids, glucose and fatty acids is used for patients with CD (p. 103).

## Total parenteral nutrition (TPN)

Parenteral nutrition may be given via a feeding catheter placed in a peripheral vein or a silicone catheter placed in the subclavian vein. Central catheters must only be placed by experienced clinicians under strict aseptic conditions in a sterile environment. The risk of introducing infection is reduced if these catheters are only used for feeding purposes, and not the administration of drugs or blood. Peripheral feeding lines usually only last for about 5 days and are reserved for when feeding is necessary for a short period. Central lines may last for months to years. Complications of TPN are given in Table 3.20.

## Monitoring of artificial nutrition

Patients receiving nutritional support should be weighed twice weekly: they require regular clinical examination to check for evidence of fluid overload or depletion. Patients receiving nutritional support in hospital initially require daily measurements of urea and electrolytes and blood glucose. More frequent measurement of blood glucose with BM sticks is indicated in patients beginning TPN. Liver biochemistry, calcium and phosphate are measured twice weekly. Serum magnesium, zinc and nitrogen balance (see below) are measured weekly. The frequency of biochemical monitoring is adjusted according to the patient's clinical and metabolic status.

It is necessary to give 40–50 g of protein per 24 hours to maintain nitrogen balance, which represents the balance between protein breakdown and

**Table 3.20** Complications of total parenteral nutrition

|   |
|---|
| Catheter related: sepsis, thrombosis, embolism and pneumothorax |
| Metabolic, e.g. hyperglycaemia, hypercalcaemia                  |
| Electrolyte disturbances  |
| Liver dysfunction   |

synthesis. The aim of any regimen is to achieve a positive nitrogen balance, which can usually be obtained by giving 3–5 g of nitrogen in excess of output. The amount of protein required to maintain nitrogen balance in a particular individual can be calculated from the amount of urinary nitrogen loss, using the formula:

$$\text{N}_2 \text{ loss (g/24 h)} = \text{Urinary urea (mmol/24 h)} \times 0.028 + 2$$

**Urinary nitrogen  $\times$  6.25 = grams of protein required (most proteins contain about 16% nitrogen)**

Most patients require about 12 g of nitrogen per 24 hours, but hypercatabolic patients require more, about 15 g/day.

## Refeeding syndrome

The refeeding syndrome occurs within the first few days of refeeding by the oral, enteral or parenteral route. It is underrecognized and can be fatal. It involves a shift from the use of fat as an energy source during starvation to the use of carbohydrate as an energy source during refeeding. With the introduction of artificial nutrition and carbohydrate by any source, insulin release is augmented and there is rapid intracellular passage of phosphate, magnesium and potassium resulting in hypophosphataemia (p. 654), hypomagnesaemia (p. 342), and hypokalaemia (p. 338). Phosphate is an integral part of cellular machinery. Deficiency results in widespread organ dysfunction (muscle weakness, rhabdomyolysis, cardiac failure, immune suppression, haemolytic anaemia, thrombocytopenia, coma, hallucinations, fits). Thiamine deficiency can be precipitated. Patients at risk of refeeding are underweight (e.g. anorexia nervosa, alcohol dependent syndrome) or those with recent rapid weight loss (5% within preceding month), including patients after treatment for morbid obesity. These at-risk patients should receive high-dose vitamin B and C vitamins, e.g. Pabrinex® 1 pair twice daily, for 5–7 days beginning before feeding, and begin feeding at 25–50% of estimated calorie requirements, increasing by 100 calories per day. Serum phosphate, magnesium, calcium, potassium, urea and creatinine, bodyweight and evidence of fluid overload should be checked daily for the first week, and electrolyte deficiencies corrected as necessary.

## DISORDERS OF BODYWEIGHT

### Obesity

Obesity, defined as an excess of body fat contributing to comorbidity, is a common problem in developed countries and is becoming more common in developing countries. A BMI of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or greater is a standard commonly used to define obesity. Overweight is defined as a BMI of 25–30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> and is

associated with a mildly increased risk of complications that have been identified in obese patients (see below). In almost all obese individuals weight gain is as a result of increased energy intake and energy expenditure is normal or indeed increased. In a few conditions, of which hypothyroidism is the commonest example, weight gain is due at least in part to reduced energy expenditure. Obese patients are at risk of a premature death, mainly from diabetes, ischaemic heart disease and cerebrovascular disease. Obesity is also associated with an increased risk of hypertension, hyperlipidaemia, obstructive sleep apnoea, osteoarthritis of the knees and hips, fatty liver, gallstones and an increased cancer risk. Weight reduction can be achieved with a reduction in calorie intake and an increase in physical activity, although in practice this is difficult to achieve. The most common diets allow a daily energy intake of 4200 kJ (1000 kcal) which in a middle-aged woman would result in a daily energy deficit (expenditure vs intake) of about 4200 kJ. A week of dieting would result in a total energy deficit of 25–29 MJ (6000–7000 kcal) and weight loss of about 1 kg. A 10% loss of body weight (i.e. 10 kg in a 100 kg person) is associated with a fall in blood pressure and a reduced risk of diabetes and overall mortality. Drug treatment such as orlistat, an inhibitor of pancreatic lipase and hence fat digestion, is sometimes used in the severely obese patient. Surgical treatment is used in some patients with morbid obesity (BMI >40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) or patients with a BMI >35 kg/m<sup>2</sup> and obesity-related complications, after conventional medical treatment has failed. The techniques used are restrictive, such as gastric banding (which restricts the ability to eat) or intestinal bypass (which reduces the ability to absorb nutrients).

## Anorexia nervosa

Anorexia nervosa is a psychological illness, predominantly affecting young females and characterized by marked weight loss (BMI <17.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>), intense fear of gaining weight, a distorted body image and amenorrhoea. Patients with anorexia nervosa control their body weight by a process of semi-starvation and/or self-induced vomiting (bulimia) and may develop consequences of undernutrition. Treatment is difficult and usually undertaken in a specialist eating disorders unit.

## THERAPEUTICS

### Drugs for dyspepsia and peptic ulceration

#### Antacids

##### Mechanism of action

Main effect is to neutralize gastric acid. Alginate-containing antacids form a 'raft' that floats on the surface of the stomach contents to reduce reflux and protect the gastro-oesophageal mucosa.

## Indications

Symptomatic relief in dyspepsia, gastro-oesophageal reflux and peptic ulceration. Healing of peptic ulcers is much less than with antisecretory drugs (see below) and antacids should not be used for this indication.

## Preparations and dose

**Aluminium hydroxide** *Tablets: 500 mg; Capsules (Alu-Cap®) 475 mg.*

1–2 tablets chewed or 1 capsule four times daily and at bedtime, or as required.

**Magnesium trisilicate mixture** *Oral suspension, 5% each of magnesium trisilicate, light magnesium carbonate, and sodium bicarbonate.*

10–20 mL in water three times daily or as required.

**Co-magaldrox (Mucogel®)** *Suspension.* Mixture of aluminium hydroxide 220 mg, and magnesium hydroxide 195 mg/5 mL.

10–20 mL 20–60 minutes after meals and at bedtime, or as required.

**Alginate-containing antacid** *Tablets, suspension.* Gaviscon® Advance contains potassium bicarbonate, sodium alginate.

1–2 tablets chewed or 10–20 mL four times daily after meals and at bedtime.

## Side-effects

Magnesium-containing antacids tend to be laxative, whereas aluminium-containing antacids may be constipating; antacids containing both aluminium and magnesium may reduce these colonic side-effects.

## Cautions/contraindications

Antacids may interfere with the absorption of other drugs and in general other drugs should be given at least 1 hour before or after each dose of antacid. The sodium content of preparations with a high sodium content, e.g. magnesium trisilicate mixture (6.3 mmol/10 mL) and Gaviscon® Advance (4.6 mmol/10 mL; 2.25 mmol/tablet) should be taken into account in patients on a 'no added' salt diet (cardiac, renal or hepatic disease). Aluminium hydroxide is contraindicated in hypophosphataemia. Constipating antacids (i.e. those containing aluminium) should be avoided in liver disease.

## H<sub>2</sub>-receptor antagonists

### Mechanism of action

Reduce gastric acid secretion as a result of histamine H<sub>2</sub>-receptor blockade.

## Indications

GORD, healing of benign gastric and duodenal ulcers, prevention of gastroduodenal damage in patients requiring intensive care, prevention of NSAID-induced DUs, and in high doses prevention of GUs. However, for all indications, PPIs are more effective and more commonly used in clinical practice.

## Preparations and dose

**Ranitidine** *Tablets: 150 mg, 300 mg; Syrup 75 mg/5 mL; Injection (Zantac®) 25 mg/mL.*

### Oral

- Gastric and duodenal ulceration 150 mg twice daily or 300 mg at night for 4–8 weeks.
- GORD: 150 mg twice daily or 300 mg at night, 150 mg four times daily in severe cases for up to 12 weeks. Reduce to lowest dose possible to relieve symptoms in maintenance treatment.
- NSAID-associated ulceration: 150 mg twice daily or 300 mg at night, 300 mg twice daily can be given for higher healing rate.
- Prophylaxis of NSAID-induced peptic ulceration, 300 mg twice daily.

**IV** 50 mg diluted to 20 mL and given over at least 2 minutes every 6–8 hours or infusion 25 mg/h for 2 hours repeated every 6–8 hours.

**Cimetidine** *Tablets: 200 mg, 400 mg, 800 mg; Syrup 200 mg/5 mL.*

### Oral

- GORD: 400 mg four times daily for 4–8 weeks; reduce down to lowest dose possible for maintenance treatment.
- Peptic ulceration: 400 mg twice daily or 800 mg at night for at least 4 weeks, 8 weeks in NSAID-associated ulceration.

## Side-effects

Diarrhoea, altered liver biochemistry, headache, dizziness, rash. Rarely, other side-effects (see national formulary).

## Cautions/contraindications

Cimetidine retards oxidative hepatic drug metabolism by binding to microsomal cytochrome P450. It should be avoided in patients stabilized on warfarin, phenytoin, and theophylline (or aminophylline) but other interactions (see national formulary) may be of less clinical relevance.

## Proton pump inhibitors

### Mechanism of action

Inhibit gastric acid secretion by blocking the hydrogen/potassium-adenosine triphosphate enzyme system (the 'proton pump') of the gastric parietal cell.

### Indications

GORD; healing of peptic ulcers; prevention of NSAID-induced peptic ulcers; in combination with antibacterials for eradication of *H. pylori*; intravenously and after endoscopic therapy to reduce re-bleeding rates in patients with bleeding peptic ulcers; inhibition of gastric acid in pathological hyper-secretory conditions, e.g. gastrinoma; prevention of peptic ulcers in critically ill patients; prophylaxis of acid aspiration during general anaesthesia; dyspepsia.

### Preparations and dose

**Omeprazole** *Capsules and tablets: 10 mg, 20 mg, 40 mg; Dispersible tablets: 10 mg, 20 mg, 40 mg; Intravenous infusion: 40 mg vial.*

- GORD: 20–40 mg once daily for 4–8 weeks, maintenance 10–20 mg once daily.
- Healing of peptic ulcers (not *H. pylori* associated): 20 mg daily for 4 weeks.
- Prevention of NSAID-induced ulcers: 20 mg daily.
- Eradication of *H. pylori* (in combination with antibacterials): 20 mg twice daily for 1 week.
- By i.v. injection in bleeding peptic ulcers: 80 mg over 5 minutes and then 8 mg/h (1 vial diluted in 100 mL 0.9% sodium chloride or 5% dextrose).
- Gastrinoma: 60 mg once daily, usual range 20–120 mg daily.
- Gastric acid reduction during general anaesthesia: 40 mg on preceding evening then 40 mg 2–6 hours before surgery.

**Lansoprazole** *Capsules: 15 mg, 30 mg; Orodispersible tablet: 15 mg, 30 mg.*

- GORD: 30 mg once daily for 4–8 weeks, maintenance 15–30 mg once daily.
- Healing of peptic ulcers (not *H. pylori* related): 30 mg daily for 4 weeks.
- Prevention of NSAID-induced ulcers: 15–30 mg daily.
- Eradication of *H. pylori* (in combination with antibacterials): 20 mg twice daily for one week.
- Gastrinoma: 60 mg once daily, usual range 30–120mg daily.

## Side-effects

Gastrointestinal disturbance (diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting), liver dysfunction, hypersensitivity reactions, headache, skin reactions, increased risk of gastrointestinal infections (due to reduced gastric acidity). Rarely, acute kidney injury, deficiency of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, calcium (leading to hip fracture) and magnesium due to reduced intestinal absorption.

## Cautions/contraindications

Omeprazole and esomeprazole competitively inhibit the CYP2C19 isoenzyme (which metabolises clopidogrel to its active metabolite) and may reduce the ability of clopidogrel to inhibit platelet aggregation. Omeprazole may decrease the effect of warfarin, phenytoin and diazepam. Lansoprazole may increase the effect of warfarin, phenytoin and theophylline. Reduce dose in severe liver disease.

## Constipation

Treatment of constipation is initially with lifestyle changes and drugs are reserved for use as second-line treatment. It may be necessary to use a combination of two different types of laxative, e.g. stimulant plus faecal softener. All laxatives are contraindicated in intestinal obstruction or perforation, paralytic ileus, and severe inflammatory conditions of the gut such as CD and UC.

### Bulk-forming laxatives

#### Mechanism of action

Absorb water and increase faecal mass, which stimulates peristalsis.

#### Indications

Treatment of slow-transit constipation and bulking of stool in patients with a colostomy, diverticular disease and irritable bowel syndrome.

### Preparations and dose

Unprocessed wheat bran is one of the most effective fibre laxatives, and patients can add it to meals, e.g. cereal (2–6 tablespoons per day).

**Ispaghula husk** *Granules: 3.5 g sachet.*

1 sachet or 2 level 5 mL spoonfuls in water twice daily after meals.

**Methycellulose** *Tablets: 500 mg.*

3–6 tablets twice daily with at least 300 mL of liquid.

**Sterculia** *Granules: 7 g sachets.*

1–2 sachets or 1–2 heaped 5 mL spoonfuls washed down with plenty of liquid once or twice daily after meals.



## Side-effects

Flatulence, abdominal distension.

## Cautions/contraindications

Maintain adequate fluid intake to prevent faecal impaction; contraindications (see above).

## Stimulant laxatives

### Mechanism of action

Increase colonic motor activity.

### Indications

Short-term treatment of constipation.

## Preparations and dose

**Bisacodyl** *Tablets: 5 mg; Suppositories: 10 mg.*

**Oral** 5–10 mg at night, occasionally increase to 15–20 mg.

**By rectum** in suppositories, 10 mg in the morning.

**Docosate sodium** *Capsules: 100 mg; Solution: 50 mg/5 mL; Micro-enema: 120 mg in 10 g single-dose pack.*

**Oral** 500 mg daily in two to three divided doses.

**By rectum** 10 g unit daily.

**Glycerol (glycerin)** *Suppositories: glycerol 700 mg.*

1 suppository moistened with water before use.

**Senna** *Tablets: 7.5 mg; Syrup: 7.5 mg/5 mL.*

2–4 tablets, 10–20 mL of syrup at night.

## Side-effects

Abdominal cramps, diarrhoea and hypokalaemia.

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindications (see above).

## Osmotic laxatives

### Mechanism of action

Attract or retain water in the intestinal lumen, leading to softer stools and improved propulsion.

## Indications

Treatment of constipation. Lactulose is used in the treatment of hepatic encephalopathy. Phosphate enemas are used to evacuate the bowel before radiological procedures, flexible sigmoidoscopy and surgery.

## Preparations and dose

**Lactulose** *Solution: 3.1–3.7g/5 mL.*

Initially 15 mL twice daily; hepatic encephalopathy: 30–50 mL three times daily adjusted to produce two to three soft stools daily.

**Macrogols (polyethylene glycol)** *Movicol® (polyethylene glycol '3350' with electrolytes).*

1–3 sachets daily in divided doses; each sachet dissolved in 125 mL of water. For smaller dosing, Movicol-Half® is also available.

**Magnesium salts** *Magnesium hydroxide mixture; Magnesium sulphate (Epsom salts).*

30–45 mL when required of magnesium hydroxide. 5–10 g of magnesium sulphate in a glass of warm water before breakfast.

**Phosphates (rectal)** *Fleet® Ready-to-use Enema: 133 mL pack.*

One enema inserted 30 minutes before evacuation required.

**Sodium citrate (rectal)** *Micralax Micro-enema®: 5 mL.*

One enema as required.

## Side-effects

Abdominal distension, colic, nausea, local irritation after phosphate enema.

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindications (see above). May also cause electrolyte disturbance. Use with caution in hepatic and renal impairment. Although magnesium ions are absorbed poorly, similar to all osmotic ions some absorption does occur, which can cause problems in patients with abnormal renal function.

## Bowel-cleansing solutions

### Indications

Used before colonic surgery, colonoscopy or radiological examination to ensure the bowel is free of solid contents. They are not treatments for constipation. Bowel-cleansing agents are coupled with a low residue diet for at least 3 days before the procedure, copious intake of water or other clear fluids and cessation of all solid foods on the day before the procedure. All are contraindicated in bowel obstruction, perforated bowel or severe colitis and Moviprep® is contraindicated in glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency.

## Mechanism of action

This is variable depending on the drug.

## Preparations and dose

**Citramag®** *Magnesium carbonate 11.57 g and citric acid 17.79 g/sachet.*

1 sachet at 8.00 a.m. and 1 sachet between 2 and 4 p.m. on day before procedure.

**Fleet Phospho-soda®** *Sodium dihydrogen phosphate dehydrate 24.4 g, disodium phosphate dodecahydrate 10.8 g/45 mL.*

45 mL diluted with 120 mL of water (half glass), followed by one full glass of water. For morning procedures, the first dose should be taken at 7 a.m. and the second dose at 7 p.m. the day before the procedure. For afternoon procedures, the first dose should be taken at 7 p.m. on the day before and the second dose at 7 a.m. on the day of the procedure.

**Klean-prep®** *Macrogol '3350' (polyethylene glycol '3350' with electrolytes.*

2 sachets diluted with water to 2 L, and 250 mL drunk rapidly every 10–15 minutes. 2 sachets on evening before examination, and 2 sachets on morning of examination.

**Moviprep®** *Sachet A containing macrogol '3350' (polyethylene glycol '3350') with electrolytes and Sachet B containing ascorbic acid 4.7 g and sodium ascorbate 5.9 g.*

Dilute sachet A and B in 1 L of water. Drink 2 L of reconstituted solution on the evening before the procedure or 1 L on the evening before and 1 L early on the morning of the procedure.

**Picolax®** *Sodium picosulfate 10 mg/sachet with magnesium citrate.*

Dosing as for Citramag®.

## Side-effects

Nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps. Occasionally dehydration and hypotension, electrolyte disturbance.

## Diarrhoea

Most cases of acute diarrhoea are infective and will settle without treatment. Oral rehydration salts (Dioralyte®), 1 sachet after every loose motion, are often used especially in the elderly and children. Antidiarrhoeal agents relieve symptoms of acute diarrhoea but are not recommended routinely. Antidiarrhoeal agents, e.g. loperamide, are sometimes used in the management of chronic diarrhoea.

**Loperamide hydrochloride** *Capsules or tablets: 2 mg.*

## Mechanism of action

Antimotility agent.

## Indications

Symptomatic treatment of acute diarrhoea; chronic diarrhoea in adults.

## Side-effects

Constipation, abdominal cramps, dizziness.

## Cautions/contraindications

Active ulcerative colitis or infective diarrhoea associated with bloody stools.

### Nausea and vomiting

Antiemetics should be prescribed only when the cause of vomiting is known (e.g. drugs particularly cytotoxic chemotherapy, post-operative, motion sickness, pregnancy, and migraine) because otherwise they may delay diagnosis. If antiemetic drug treatment is indicated, the drug is chosen according to the aetiology of vomiting. Dexamethasone (p. 665) has antiemetic effects and is used in vomiting associated with cancer chemotherapy. It has additive effects when given with high-dose metoclopramide or with a 5-HT<sub>3</sub>-receptor antagonist such as ondansetron. The mechanism of action of dexamethasone as an antiemetic is unknown but may involve reduction of prostaglandin synthesis.

## Antihistamines

### Indications

Motion sickness, drug-induced vomiting, vestibular disorders, such as vertigo and tinnitus.

### Mechanism of action

Competitive antagonist at the histamine H<sub>1</sub> receptor.

## Preparations and dose

**Cyclizine** *Valoid*® tablets: 50 mg; Injection 50 mg/mL.

**Oral** 50 mg up to three times daily.

**IM/IV injection** 50 mg three times daily.

**Promethazine** *Phenergan*® tablets: 10 mg, 25 mg; Elixir: 5 mg/mL; Injection: 25 mg/mL.

**Oral** for motion sickness prevention, 20–25 mg (at bedtime the night before travel).

**IM/IV** 25–50 mg.

## Side-effects

Drowsiness, antimuscarinic effects (urinary retention, dry mouth, blurred vision), palpitations, arrhythmias and rashes.

## Cautions/contraindications

Caution in prostatic hypertrophy, urinary retention, glaucoma and pyloro-duodenal obstruction (due to antimuscarinic effects). Drug interactions – see national formulary.

## Phenothiazines

### Mechanism of action

Dopamine antagonists. Act centrally by blocking the chemoreceptor trigger zone (CTZ) in the fourth ventricle. Many drugs produce vomiting by an action on the CTZ.

## Indications

Phenothiazines are used for the prophylaxis and treatment of nausea and vomiting associated with diffuse neoplastic disease, radiation sickness and vomiting caused by drugs such as general anaesthetics, opioids and cytotoxics. Chlorpromazine is associated with more sedation and is usually reserved for nausea and vomiting of terminal illness.

## Preparations and dose

**Chlorpromazine hydrochloride** *Tablets: 25 mg, 50 mg, 100 mg; Solution: 25 mg/5 mL, 100 mg/5 mL; Injection: 25 mg/mL; Suppositories: 25 mg and 100 mg.*

**Oral** 10–25mg every 4–6 hours.

**IM** 25mg then 25–50mg every 3–4 hours.

**By rectum** In suppositories: 100 mg every 6–8 hours.

**Prochlorperazine** *Tablets 5 mg; Stemetil® tablets and suppositories: 5 mg; Syrup: 5 mg/mL; Injection: 12.5 mg/mL.*

**Oral** 20 mg initially, then 10 mg after 2 hours; prevention: 5–10 mg two to three times daily.

**IM** 12.5 mg followed if necessary after 6 hours by an oral dose.

## Side-effects

See antipsychotics (p. 798).

## Cautions/contraindications

See antipsychotics (p. 798).

## Domperidone and metoclopramide

### Mechanism of action

Block dopamine receptors and inhibit dopaminergic stimulation of the CTZ.

### Indications

Domperidone is used particularly in post-operative nausea and vomiting and also gastro-oesophageal reflux disease and dyspepsia. Metoclopramide is particularly used in nausea and vomiting associated with cytotoxics or radiotherapy.

### Preparations and dose

**Metoclopramide** *Tablets: 10 mg; Syrup: 5 mg/mL; Injection: 5 mg/mL.*

**Oral/IM/IV** (over 1–2 minutes): 10 mg three times daily.

**Domperidone** *Tablets: 10 mg; Motilium® tablets: 10 mg; Suspension: 5 mg/mL; Suppositories: 30 mg.*

**Oral** 10–20 mg three to four times daily; maximum 80 mg.

**By rectum** 60 mg twice daily.

### Side-effects

Central nervous system effects are produced by metoclopramide and to a lesser extent by domperidone (due to limited passage across the blood–brain barrier). Extrapyramidal effects include acute dystonias (treated by drug cessation and procyclidine 5–10 mg i.m./i.v.), akathisia and a parkinsonism-like syndrome. Drowsiness with high doses of metoclopramide. Galactorrhoea is caused by hyperprolactinaemia as a result of dopamine receptor blockade.

### Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in gastrointestinal obstruction, 3–4 days after gastrointestinal surgery where increased motility may be harmful, and phaeochromocytoma.

## 5-HT<sub>3</sub>-receptor antagonists

### Mechanism of action

Block the 5-HT<sub>3</sub>-receptors in the CTZ (see phenothiazines, p. 135) and in the gut.

### Indications

Particularly effective against vomiting induced by highly emetogenic chemotherapeutic agents and radiotherapy used for treating malignancy and post-operative vomiting that is resistant to other agents.

## Preparations and dose

Examples: dolasetron, granisetron, ondansetron, palonosetron.

**Ondansetron** *Tablets: 4 mg; Injection: 2 mg/mL; Zofran® syrup: 4 mg/5 mL; Suppositories: 16 mg.*

- Chemotherapy: 8mg by mouth, or 16 mg by rectum 1–2 hours before treatment; or by i.m./i.v. injection, 8 mg immediately before treatment, then by mouth, 8 mg every 12 hours; or by rectum, 16 mg daily. With severely emetogenic chemotherapy, treatment is given i.m./i.v. and continued by infusion 1 mg/h for up to 24 hours.
- Prevention of post-operative nausea and vomiting: by mouth, 16 mg 1 hour before anaesthesia; or by i.m./i.v. injection, 4 mg at induction of anaesthesia.

## Side-effects

Headache, constipation, hypersensitivity reactions. Following i.v. administration: seizures, chest pain, arrhythmias, hypotension and bradycardia.

## Cautions/contraindications

Caution with prolonged QT interval and cardiac conduction disorders.

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# Liver, biliary tract and pancreatic disease

In most Western countries alcohol and hepatitis C are the major causes of liver disease. Elsewhere, infection with hepatitis B virus is a common cause but the incidence is decreasing with vaccination.

The liver is the main site for the metabolism of some drugs and alcohol and has other major functions:

- *Control of synthesis and metabolism of protein.* All circulating proteins except  $\gamma$ -globulins (made by lymphocytes) are synthesized in the liver. These include albumin (which maintains intravascular oncotic pressure and transports water-insoluble substances such as bilirubin and some drugs in the plasma), transport and carrier proteins such as transferrin, and all factors involved in coagulation and components of the complement system. The liver eliminates nitrogenous waste by degradation of amino acids, conversion to urea and renal excretion.
- *Maintenance of blood sugar.* The liver does this by releasing glucose into the blood stream in the fasted state, either by breakdown of stored glycogen or by synthesizing glucose from amino acids (from muscle) or glycerol (from adipose tissue).
- *Lipid metabolism.* The liver manufactures most of the body's cholesterol; the rest comes from food. Cholesterol is used to make bile salts and is also needed to make certain hormones, including oestrogen, testosterone and the adrenal hormones. The liver also synthesizes lipoproteins and triglycerides (most are of dietary origin).
- *Metabolism and excretion of bilirubin and bile acids.* Bile acids are formed from cholesterol and excreted into bile and pass into the duodenum via the common bile duct (CBD), where they solubilize lipid for digestion and absorption. Bilirubin is formed from the breakdown of mature red cells and eventually excreted in urine and faeces.

## LIVER BIOCHEMISTRY AND LIVER FUNCTION TESTS

A routine blood sample sent to the laboratory for liver biochemistry will be processed by an automated multichannel analyser to produce serum levels of bilirubin, aminotransferases, alkaline phosphatase,  $\gamma$ -glutamyl transpeptidase ( $\gamma$ -GT) and total proteins. These tests are often referred to as 'liver function tests' (LFTs) but this term is misleading as they do not accurately reflect how well the liver is functioning. These tests are best referred to as 'liver blood tests' or 'liver biochemistry'. Liver synthetic function is determined by measuring the prothrombin time (clotting factors are synthesized in the liver) and serum albumin, which are increased and reduced, respectively, with impaired function. Hypoalbuminaemia is also found in hypercatabolic states (e.g. chronic inflammatory disease and sepsis) and where there is excessive renal (nephrotic syndrome) or intestinal (protein-losing enteropathy) loss of albumin. A prolonged prothrombin time may also occur as a result of vitamin K deficiency in biliary obstruction (low concentration of intestinal bile salts results in poor absorption of vitamin K); however, unlike in liver disease, clotting is corrected by giving vitamin K 10 mg intravenously for 2–3 days.

- *Bilirubin* (normal range  $<17 \mu\text{mol/L}$ , 1.00 mg/dL) is the breakdown product of haemoglobin (see p. 145). An isolated rise in serum bilirubin with otherwise normal liver biochemistry is likely to be due to an inherited defect in bilirubin metabolism (usually Gilbert's disease), haemolysis or ineffective erythropoiesis (premature death of the red cell in the bone marrow). Hyperbilirubinaemia caused by hepatobiliary disease is almost always accompanied by other abnormalities of liver biochemistry; very high levels occur most frequently in biliary tract obstruction. Serial measurements are useful in following the progress of some diseases, e.g. primary biliary cirrhosis, or the response to treatment, e.g. after placement of a stent in cancer of the head of the pancreas.
- *Aminotransferases*. These enzymes are present in hepatocytes and leak into the blood with liver cell damage. Very high levels may occur with acute hepatitis (20–50 times normal). Aspartate aminotransferase (AST, normal range 10–40 U/L) is also present in heart and skeletal muscle, and raised serum concentrations are also seen with myocardial infarction and skeletal muscle damage. Alanine aminotransferase (ALT, normal range 5–40 U/L) is more specific to the liver than AST.
- *Alkaline phosphatase* (normal range 25–115 U/L) is situated in the canalicular and sinusoidal membranes of the liver. Raised serum concentrations are seen in cholestasis (bile flow is impaired or completely halted) from any cause, whether intra- or extrahepatic disease. Circulating alkaline phosphatase is also derived from the placenta and bone, and raised serum levels occur in pregnancy, Paget's disease, osteomalacia, growing children and bony metastases. Measurement of alkaline phosphatase

isoenzymes or serum  $\gamma$ -GT, see below) will determine if a raised serum alkaline phosphatase is predominantly of bone or liver origin.

- $\gamma$ -GT (normal range: male <50 U/L, female <32 U/L) is a liver microsomal enzyme which may be induced by alcohol and enzyme-inducing drugs, e.g. phenytoin. A raised serum concentration is a useful screen for alcohol abuse. In cholestasis the  $\gamma$ -GT rises in parallel with the serum alkaline phosphatase because it has a similar pathway of excretion.

## Approach to interpretation of abnormal liver biochemistry

A predominant elevation of serum aminotransferases indicates hepatocellular injury. Elevation of the serum bilirubin and alkaline phosphatase in excess of aminotransferases indicates a cholestatic disorder such as primary biliary cirrhosis, primary sclerosing cholangitis or extrahepatic bile duct obstruction. An isolated rise in bilirubin is most likely to be due to Gilbert's disease. The approach to investigating a rise in serum bilirubin is discussed under 'Jaundice' (p. 145). A careful history (alcohol consumption, exposure to hepatotoxic drugs, risk factors for chronic liver disease), physical examination (particularly features of chronic liver disease), simple laboratory tests (to look for viral hepatitis, metabolic and autoimmune liver disease, Table 4.1), and an ultrasound (US) examination of the liver are the usual first steps in patients with a persistent elevation of serum aminotransferases. A liver biopsy (p. 143) may subsequently be necessary.

## OTHER INVESTIGATIONS IN LIVER AND BILIARY DISEASE

Imaging with abdominal US and computed tomography (CT) is widely used in the investigation of liver and biliary disease. US is usually performed first and is a more useful test for lesions in the gall bladder and bile duct. Endoscopic US (p. 69) is used to detect and stage pancreatic tumours, assess the bile ducts, confirm malignancy (using US guided fine needle aspiration of tumours), and for tube placement to drain pancreatic fluid collections.

**Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)** This is the most sensitive investigation of focal liver disease. It is also useful in patients with allergies to iodine-based contrast materials in whom contrast-enhanced CT scan could not be performed. A specific technique (magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography, MRCP) produces high-quality images of the pancreatic and bile ducts that are similar in appearance to those obtained by endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) (see below). This non-invasive technique is replacing diagnostic, but not therapeutic, ERCP.

**Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP)** involves the passage of an endoscope to the second part of duodenum and is

**Table 4.1** Causes of chronic liver disease and cirrhosis

| Cause   | Non-invasive markers of aetiology  |
|---|--|
| <b>Common</b>                                       |  |
| Alcohol   | History of excess alcohol, ↑ serum $\gamma$ -GT, ↑ MCV   |
| Hepatitis B $\pm$ D                                 | HBSAg $\pm$ HBeAg/DNA in serum   |
| Hepatitis C   | HCV antibodies and HCV RNA in serum  |
| <b>Others</b>                                       |  |
| Primary biliary cirrhosis                           | Serum antimitochondrial antibodies, ↑ serum IgM  |
| Secondary biliary cirrhosis                         | Dilated extrahepatic ducts on imaging  |
| Autoimmune hepatitis                                | Serum autoantibodies (p. 159), ↑ serum IgG   |
| Haemochromatosis                                    | Family history, ↑ serum ferritin, ↑ transferrin saturation, <i>HFE</i> gene  |
| Budd–Chiari syndrome                                | Presence of known risk factors (p. 177), caudate lobe hypertrophy, abnormal flow in major hepatic veins on US                                      |
| Wilson’s disease                                    | <40 years old, ↓ serum caeruloplasmin, ↓ serum total copper, ↑ 24-h urinary copper excretion, Kayser–Fleischer rings                               |
| Drugs   | Drug history, e.g. methotrexate  |
| $\alpha_1$ -antitrypsin (AAT) deficiency            | Young age, associated emphysema, ↓ serum AAT   |
| Cystic fibrosis (CF)                                | Presence of extrahepatic manifestations of CF  |
| NAFLD   | Features of the metabolic syndrome, hyperechoic liver on US  |
| Sclerosing cholangitis: primary (PSC) and secondary | Most PSC patients have IBD and serum p-ANCA (p. 299), multifocal stricturing and dilatation of bile ducts on cholangiography (either MRCP or ERCP) |
| Metabolic storage diseases                          | Presence of extrahepatic features  |
| Idiopathic (cryptogenic)                            | Absence of any identifiable cause including on liver biopsy  |

*NAFLD, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease; IBD, inflammatory bowel disease;  $\gamma$ -GT,  $\gamma$ -glutamyl transpeptidase; MCV, mean corpuscular volume; ERCP, endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography; MRCP, magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography; p-ANCA, peripheral antineutrophilic cytoplasmic antibody.*

performed under intravenous sedation. The pancreatic and bile ducts are imaged after the injection of radiographic contrast medium via the ampulla of Vater. Stones in the ducts can be removed and stents placed to relieve obstruction caused by strictures. Complications of ERCP include bleeding (after cutting of the sphincter to aid bile duct cannulation or stone removal), acute pancreatitis, perforation and cholangitis.

**Percutaneous transhepatic cholangiopancreatography (PTC)** involves injection of contrast into the biliary system via a percutaneously placed needle inserted into an intrahepatic duct. It is performed in patients with biliary dilatation in whom ERCP has failed or is not possible. If an obstruction in the bile duct is seen, a bypass stent can be inserted, draining either externally or internally, for long-term use.

**Liver biopsy** for histological examination is usually performed via a percutaneous approach under local anaesthesia. Contraindications include an uncooperative patient, a prolonged prothrombin time (by more than 3–5 s), platelet count  $<50 \times 10^9/L$ , extrahepatic cholestasis and suspected haemangioma. An US or CT guided biopsy is also performed when specific lesions need to be biopsied. Complications include biliary peritonitis and bleeding into peritoneum or into the bile duct (haemobilia).

**Assessment of liver fibrosis and cirrhosis** is usually made by histopathological examination of a liver biopsy specimen. Disadvantages of liver biopsy are sampling error and its invasive nature. Imaging (US, CT and MRI) will detect advanced liver disease such as nodularity and portal hypertension but will not assess the earlier stages of fibrosis. Non-invasive techniques recently developed are US- and MRI-elastography, which measure hepatic tissue stiffness as an indicator of fibrosis, and serum tests that measure a panel of biomarkers (Fibrotect/Fibrosure) to provide an assessment of severity of fibrosis. They are very accurate at excluding fibrosis. These methods are still under evaluation, but may restrict liver biopsy in patients with chronic liver disease of known cause to those in whom non-invasive testing does not reliably show the stage of fibrosis/cirrhosis.

## SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS OF LIVER DISEASE

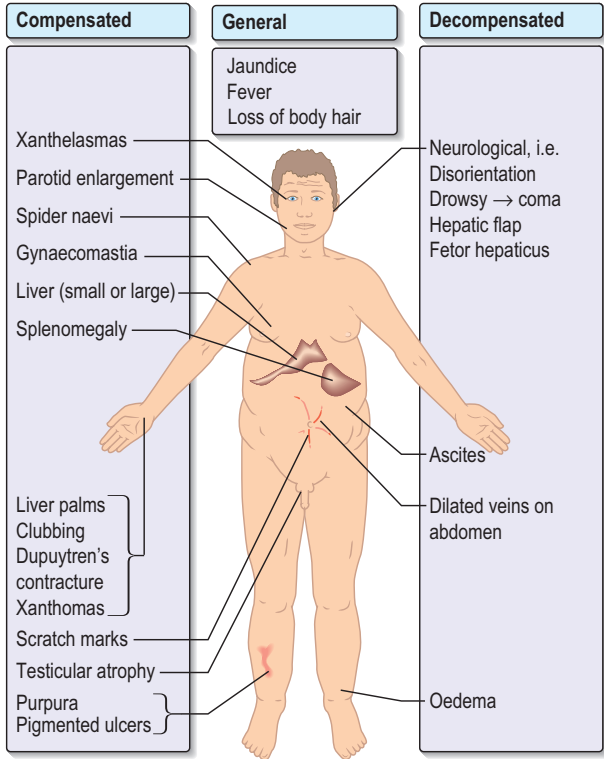
Acute liver disease, e.g. viral hepatitis, may be asymptomatic or present with generalized symptoms of lethargy, anorexia and malaise in the early stages, with jaundice developing later (p. 145).

Chronic liver disease may also be asymptomatic and discovered from an incidental finding of abnormal liver biochemistry. Some patients with chronic liver disease may present at a late stage with complications of cirrhosis, causing:

- Ascites, with abdominal swelling and discomfort (p. 166)
- Haematemesis and melaena due to bleeding oesophageal varices (p. 164)
- Confusion and drowsiness due to hepatic encephalopathy (p. 168).

Patients presenting in this way are often extremely unwell and a detailed history may not be obtained. However, physical examination will often reveal the signs of chronic liver disease (Fig. 4.1) and thus point to liver disease as the cause of the presenting illness.

Pruritus (itching) occurs in cholestatic jaundice from any cause (p. 146), but is particularly common in primary biliary cirrhosis, when it may be the only symptom (without jaundice) at presentation. Pruritus may



Spider naevi, telangiectases that consist of a central arteriole with radiating small vessels found in the distribution of superior vena cava; liver palms (palmer erythema), reddening of palms at the thenar and hypothenar eminences is a non-specific change indicative of a hyperdynamic circulation; fetor hepaticus, a distinctive musty, sweet breath odour in severe liver disease.

**Fig. 4.1** Physical signs in chronic liver disease.

occur in association with other systemic diseases (e.g. hyperthyroidism, polycythaemia, renal failure, malignant disease) and skin diseases (e.g. scabies, eczema), but in these cases there are usually additional symptoms or signs that suggest the diagnosis.

## JAUNDICE

Jaundice (icterus) is a yellow discoloration of the sclerae and skin as a result of a raised serum bilirubin. It is usually detectable clinically when the bilirubin exceeds 50  $\mu\text{mol/L}$  (3 mg/dL).

Bilirubin is derived predominantly from the breakdown of haemoglobin in the spleen, and is carried in the blood bound to albumin. Unconjugated bilirubin is conjugated in the liver by glucuronyl transferase to bilirubin glucuronide, and this is excreted via the bile duct into the small intestine in bile. In the terminal ileum conjugated bilirubin is converted to urobilinogen and excreted in the faeces (as stercobilinogen, responsible for the pigmentation of faeces) or reabsorbed and excreted by the kidneys (Fig. 4.2).

For clinical and diagnostic purposes three major categories of jaundice can be considered:

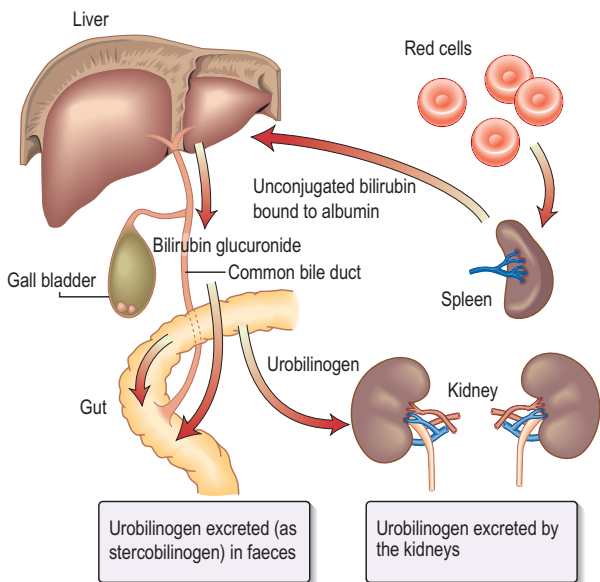
- Haemolytic jaundice
- Congenital hyperbilirubinaemias – impaired conjugation of bilirubin or bilirubin handling by the liver. Liver biochemistry is normal other than raised bilirubin.
- Cholestatic jaundice – failure of bile secretion by the liver or bile duct obstruction. Liver biochemistry is abnormal.

## Haemolytic jaundice

Increased breakdown of red blood cells leads to increased production of bilirubin, which usually results in mild jaundice only (68–102  $\mu\text{mol/L}$  or 4–6 mg/dL), as the liver can usually handle the increased bilirubin derived from haemolysis. The unconjugated bilirubin is not water soluble and therefore does not pass into the urine, unlike the conjugated hyperbilirubinaemia of cholestatic jaundice. Urinary urobilinogen is increased. The causes are those of haemolytic anaemia (p. 206), with the clinical features dependent on the cause. Investigations show features of haemolysis (p. 207), with raised serum unconjugated bilirubin and otherwise normal liver biochemistry.

## Congenital hyperbilirubinaemia

The most common congenital hyperbilirubinaemia is Gilbert's syndrome, which affects 2–7% of the population. It is asymptomatic and is usually picked up as an incidental finding of a slightly raised serum bilirubin (17–102  $\mu\text{mol/L}$ , 1–6 mg/dL). Mutations in the gene coding for UDP-glucuronyl transferase lead to reduced enzyme activity and reduced conjugation of



**Fig. 4.2** Pathways in bilirubin metabolism.

bilirubin with glucuronic acid. Diagnosis is based on the findings of unconjugated hyperbilirubinaemia with otherwise normal liver biochemistry, normal full blood count, smear and reticulocyte count (thus excluding haemolysis) and absence of signs of liver disease. The patient should be reassured that no further investigation or treatment is necessary.

Other congenital abnormalities of bilirubin metabolism (Crigler–Najjar, Dubin–Johnson and Rotor’s syndromes, benign recurrent intrahepatic cholestasis) are rare.


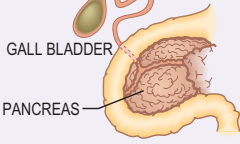
## Cholestatic jaundice

This can be divided into the following (Fig. 4.3):

- Intrahepatic cholestasis, caused by hepatocellular swelling in parenchymal liver disease or abnormalities at a cellular level of bile excretion
- Extrahepatic cholestasis resulting from obstruction of bile flow at any point distal to the bile canaliculi.

In both types there is jaundice with pale stools and dark urine and the bilirubin is conjugated.



| Types                           | HAEMOGLOBIN<br>↓<br>BILIRUBIN   | Causes   |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Prehepatic                      |   | Haemolysis   |
| Cholestatic<br><br>Intrahepatic | CONJUGATION<br><br>                              | Viral hepatitis<br>Drugs<br>Alcoholic hepatitis<br>Cirrhosis – any type<br>Pregnancy<br>Recurrent idiopathic cholestasis<br>Some congenital disorders<br>Infiltrations |
|                                 | Extrahepatic<br><br><br>GALL BLADDER<br>PANCREAS | Common duct stones<br>Carcinoma<br>– bile duct<br>– head of pancreas<br>– ampulla<br><br>Biliary stricture<br>Sclerosing cholangitis<br>Pancreatitis<br>Pseudocyst     |

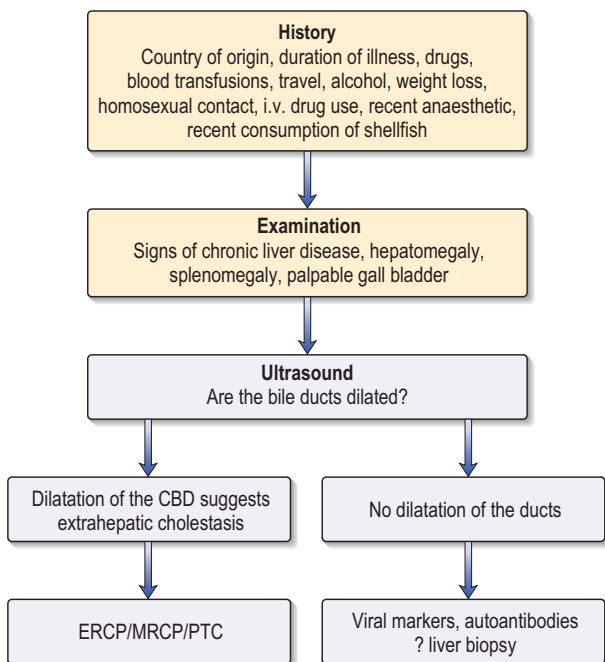
**Fig. 4.3** Causes of jaundice.

However, intrahepatic and extrahepatic cholestatic jaundice must be differentiated as their management is quite different.

## Investigations

An outline of the approach to the investigation of jaundice is shown in Fig. 4.4.

- Serum liver biochemistry will confirm the jaundice. The AST tends to be high early in the course of hepatitis, with a smaller rise in alkaline phosphatase. Conversely, in extrahepatic obstruction the alkaline phosphatase is elevated, with a smaller rise in the AST.
- US examination shows dilated bile ducts in extrahepatic cholestasis and may identify the level of obstruction and the cause e.g. gallstones, tumours.
- Serum viral markers for hepatitis A or hepatitis B are present in acute viral hepatitis. Antibodies to hepatitis C virus develop late in the course of acute infection but HCV RNA is usually detectable by 1–2 weeks.
- Other tests – prothrombin time may be prolonged as a result of vitamin K malabsorption and is corrected by administration of vitamin K (p. 242). Serum autoantibodies are present in autoimmune liver disease (see later).



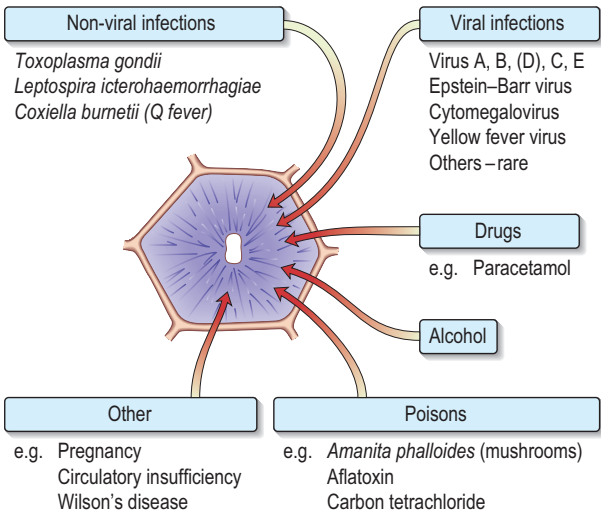
ERCP = endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography  
 MRCP = magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography  
 PTC = percutaneous transhepatic cholangiogram

**Fig. 4.4** Approach to the investigation of cholestatic jaundice. The order of investigation is influenced by the age of the patient and hence the likely cause of jaundice. A young person is most likely to have intrinsic liver disease, e.g. viral hepatitis, and it may be more appropriate to organize tests to exclude these conditions before proceeding to US. See page 150 for clinical features.

## HEPATITIS

The pathological features of hepatitis are liver cell necrosis and inflammatory cell infiltration. Hepatitis is divided into acute and chronic types on the basis of clinical and pathological criteria.

**Acute hepatitis** is most commonly caused by one of the hepatitis viruses (Fig. 4.5). Acute hepatitis is usually self-limiting with a return to normal structure and function. Occasionally there is progression to massive liver cell necrosis (p. 158). Clinically the patient may be jaundiced, with an enlarged and tender liver, and there is laboratory evidence of hepatocellular damage



**Fig. 4.5** Some causes of acute parenchymal damage.

with raised serum aminotransferase levels. Disease severity is assessed by the prothrombin time (p. 140) and serum bilirubin. Alcoholic hepatitis is distinguished from other causes of acute hepatitis by characteristic laboratory abnormalities (p. 175).

**Chronic hepatitis** is defined as sustained inflammatory disease of the liver lasting for more than 6 months (Table 4.2). Chronic viral hepatitis is the principal cause of chronic liver disease, cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) world-wide.

## Viral hepatitis<sup>nd</sup>

The differing features of the common forms of viral hepatitis are summarized in Table 4.3. All cases must be notified<sup>(nd)</sup> to the appropriate public health authority. This allows contacts to be traced and provides data on disease incidence.

## Hepatitis A<sup>nd</sup>

### Epidemiology

Hepatitis A (HAV) is the most common type of acute viral hepatitis. It occurs world-wide and affects particularly children and young adults. Spread is

**Table 4.2** Causes of chronic hepatitis

|   |
|---|
| <b>Viral</b>  |
| Hepatitis B ± D<br>Hepatitis C                            |
| <b>Autoimmune</b>   |
| <b>Drugs</b>  |
| Methyldopa<br>Nitrofurantoin<br>Isoniazid<br>Ketoconazole |
| <b>Hereditary</b>   |
| Wilson's disease  |
| <b>Others</b>   |
| Inflammatory bowel disease<br>Alcohol                     |

faecal–oral and arises from the ingestion of contaminated food (e.g. shellfish, clams) or water. The virus is excreted in the faeces of infected individuals for about 2 weeks before the onset of the illness and for up to 7 days after. It is most infectious just before the onset of the jaundice.

### Clinical features

After an average incubation period of 28 days, the viraemia causes non-specific prodromal symptoms of nausea, anorexia and distaste for cigarettes. After 1 or 2 weeks some patients become jaundiced with dark urine and pale stools and the prodromal symptoms improve. There is moderate hepatomegaly and the spleen is palpable in 10% of cases. Occasionally lymphadenopathy and a skin rash are present. The illness is self-limiting and usually over in 3–6 weeks. Rarely there is fulminant hepatitis (p. 158), coma and death.

### Investigations

- Liver biochemistry shows raised ALT and raised bilirubin when jaundice develops.
- The blood count may show a leucopenia with relative lymphocytosis and a high erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR). The prothrombin time is prolonged in severe cases.
- Acute HAV infection is diagnosed by IgM anti-HAV in the serum; the presence of IgG anti-HAV indicates past infection.

**Table 4.3** Some features of viral hepatitis

| Virus  | A<br>RNA              | B<br>DNA   | D<br>RNA                         | C<br>RNA               | E<br>RNA                     |
|--|-----------------------|--|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Transmission (main sources)  | Faecal-oral<br>Saliva | *Blood/ blood products<br>Sexual<br>Vertical<br>Saliva | *Blood/ blood products<br>Saliva | *Blood/ Blood products | Faecal-oral                  |
| Incubation   | 2-6 weeks             | 1-5 months   | 1-3 months                       | 2-6 months             | 3-8 weeks                    |
| Chronic liver disease  | No                    | Yes  | Yes                              | Yes                    | No                           |
| Liver cancer   | No                    | Yes  | Rare                             | Yes                    | No                           |
| Mortality (acute)  | <0.5%                 | <1%  |                                  | <1%                    | 1-2% (pregnant women 10-20%) |
| <i>*Blood/blood products includes transfusion of infected blood or blood products or by contaminated needles used by drug addicts, tattooists or acupuncturists.</i> |                       |  |                                  |                        |                              |

## Differential diagnosis

This includes other causes of jaundice and in particular other types of viral and drug-induced hepatitis.

## Management

There is no specific treatment. Hospital admission is not usually necessary and avoidance of alcohol advised only when the patient is ill.

## Prophylaxis

- *Active immunization* with an inactivated strain of the virus is given to travellers to areas of high prevalence (Africa, Asia, South America, eastern Europe, the Middle East), patients with chronic liver disease (in whom the disease is more severe), patients with haemophilia treated with plasma-derived clotting factors, and persons who have occupational risk for exposure (staff and residents of homes who have severe learning difficulties, workers at risk of exposure to untreated sewage).

Control of hepatitis also depends on good hygiene. Travellers to high-risk areas should drink only boiled or bottled water and avoid risky foods.

- *Passive immunization* with immunoglobulin is given to close contacts of confirmed cases of hepatitis A to prevent infection.

## Hepatitis B<sup>nd</sup>

### Epidemiology

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is present world-wide and is particularly prevalent in parts of Africa, the Middle and Far East. Vertical transmission from mother to child during parturition is the most common means of transmission world-wide. HBV is also spread through blood and blood products, sexual intercourse, particularly in men who have sex with men, and horizontal transmission occurs particularly in children through minor abrasions or close contact with other children.

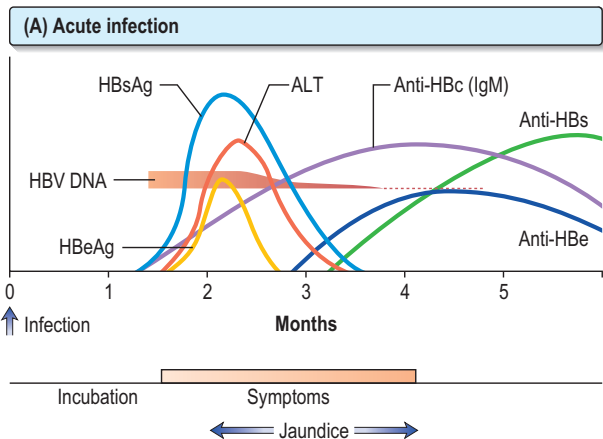
### Viral structure

The whole virus is the Dane particle, which consists of an inner core or nucleocapsid surrounded by an outer envelope of surface protein (hepatitis B surface antigen, HBsAg). The inner core contains incomplete double-stranded circular DNA and DNA polymerase/reverse transcriptase and is surrounded by the core proteins (HBcAg and HBeAg). These two proteins have most of their sequence in common but HBeAg is secreted since it is processed differently from the HBcAg and not assembled into the progeny virus. HBsAg is also secreted into the serum and is a marker of HBV infection.

Mutations can occur in all regions of the HBV genome. They can emerge in patients with chronic HBV infection (escape mutants) or can be acquired by infection. HBV mutations can potentially modulate the severity of liver disease by altering the level of HBV replication or the expression of immunogenic epitopes (the site against which T cells respond). Mutants in HBsAg result in changes in the antibody binding domain and the usual tests for HBsAg may be affected. Other mutants stop production of HBeAg (a serum marker of active viral replication) but the virus can continue to replicate with the presence of HBV DNA in the serum and elevated liver enzymes. HBV DNA must therefore always be measured in an HBsAg-positive patient to determine the level of viral replication.

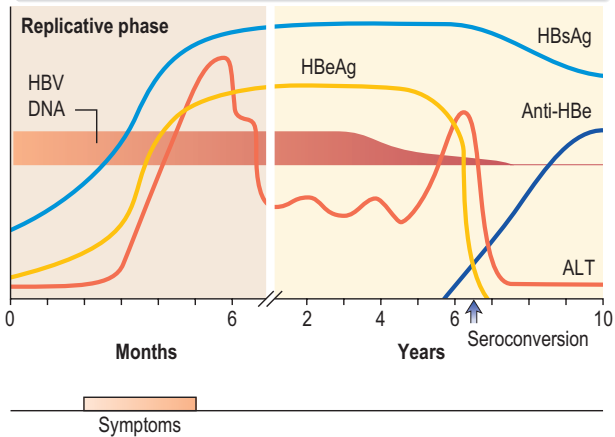
## Acute HBV infection

HBV penetrates the hepatocyte and in immunocompetent adults there is a strong cellular immune response to the foreign HBV proteins expressed by hepatocytes. This response leads to clearance of the infection in 99% of infected adults and is marked by the disappearance of HBsAg from the serum, the development of antibodies to surface antigen (anti-HBs) and immunity to subsequent infection (Fig. 4.6A and Table 4.4). Acute infection may be asymptomatic or produce symptoms and signs similar to those seen in hepatitis A. Occasionally it is associated with a rash or polyarthritis affecting the small joints. One per cent of patients develop fulminant liver failure (p. 158). Investigation is generally the same as for hepatitis A. There is no specific therapy for *acute* HBV infection and management is supportive.



**Fig. 4.6** Time course of the events and serological changes seen following infection with hepatitis B virus.

*Continued*

**(B) Development of chronic hepatitis followed by seroconversion****(A) Acute infection.***Antigens*

**HBsAg** appears in the blood from about 6 weeks to 3 months after an acute infection and then disappears.

**HBeAg** rises early and usually declines rapidly.

*Antibodies*

**Anti-HBs** appears late and indicates immunity.

**Anti-HBc** is the first antibody to appear and high titres of IgM anti-HBc suggest an acute and continuing viral replication. It persists for many months. **IgM anti-HBc** may be the only serological indicator of recent HBV infection in a period when HBsAg has disappeared and anti-HBs is not detectable in the serum.

**Anti-HBe** appears after the anti-HBc and its appearance relates to a decreased infectivity, i.e. a low risk.

**(B) Development of chronic hepatitis followed by seroconversion.**

**HBsAg** persists and indicates a chronic infection (or carrier state).

**HBeAg** persists and correlates with increased severity and infectivity and the development of chronic liver disease. When anti-HBe develops (seroconversion) the Ag disappears and there is a rise in ALT.

**HBV DNA** suggests continual viral replication. For **mutants**, see text.

**Fig. 4.6** (Continued)

**Chronic HBV infection**

The persistence of HBsAg in the serum for *more than 6 months* after acute infection defines chronic infection. Progression from acute to chronic infection depends on several factors including the virulence of the virus, and the immunocompetence and age of the patient. When HBV infection is acquired



**Table 4.4** Serologic markers of hepatitis B infection

|                                       | HBsAg    | anti-HBc | anti-HBs | IgM anti-HBc |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|
| Susceptible to infection              | Negative | Negative | Negative | Negative     |
| Immune due to natural infection       | Negative | Positive | Positive | Negative     |
| Immune due to hepatitis B vaccination | Negative | Negative | Positive | Negative     |
| Acutely infected                      | Positive | Positive | Negative | Positive     |
| Chronically infected                  | Positive | Positive | Negative | Negative     |

at birth (vertical transmission) or early childhood there is a high level of immunological tolerance and cellular immune responses to hepatocyte-membrane HBV proteins do not occur and chronic infection is the norm. This *immune tolerant phase* is characterized by minimal hepatic inflammatory activity and normal or near-normal serum ALT despite positive HBeAg and high levels of HBV replication (reflected by high levels of serum HBV DNA). This phase may persist for 2–3 decades before an *immune clearance* phase that lasts for a variable period of time and is characterized by high HBV DNA levels as before but now is an active hepatitis (that might lead to fibrosis and cirrhosis) with elevated serum ALT. This phase ends with clearance of HBeAg and development of anti-HBe (HBeAg seroconversion) with a marked decrease in serum HBV DNA and normalization of serum ALT (*the inactive HBsAg carrier state*). Some patients during the immune clearance phase will develop viral mutations (see above) that do not produce HBeAg but continue to replicate at high levels and have progressive liver damage with fluctuating serum levels of aminotransferases (*reactivation phase*). Acquisition of infection later in life is associated with a very short immune tolerant phase or not at all. Most patients clear the virus (see acute infection) and only a small percentage will progress to chronic infection (Fig. 4.6B).

Table 4.4 summarizes the serological markers of HBV infection at various stages.

### Treatment of chronic infection: whom to treat

Patients who present with detectable HBsAg and clinical and/or epidemiological factors suggestive of chronic infection can be considered for treatment without waiting for the 6-month period that defines chronicity after acute infection. In HBsAg-positive individuals there is a strong relationship between ongoing HBV replication and the risk of progression of chronic liver disease to cirrhosis, HCC or both. Serum HBV DNA is a direct measure of the level of viral replication and should be obtained for all patients with chronic infection. Treatment is given to patients who are most likely to develop progressive liver disease (i.e. high levels of HBV replication) and to those who are most likely to

respond to treatment. Thus patients with chronic HBV infection (HBsAg-positive), high serum levels of HBV DNA ( $\geq 20\,000$  IU per ml) and elevated serum ALT should be given antiviral treatment (see below). Antiviral therapy is not used for inactive HBV carriers (normal ALT and HBV DNA  $\leq 2000$  IU/mL) who are at low risk for progressive liver disease. However, they should have annual assessment of hepatitis B serology and liver biochemistry, since some will develop progressive disease and require treatment. Patients who lie outside these categories may require treatment if significant inflammation or necrosis is found on a liver biopsy or serum ALT increases on follow-up.

## Antiviral agents

The aim of treatment is the seroconversion of HBeAg (when present) and the reduction of HBV DNA to undetectable levels. In addition, normalization of ALT and histological improvement in inflammation and fibrosis reflects a good response. Pegylated interferon alfa (IFN), and lamivudine, adefovir, entecavir and tenofovir, are the most commonly used drugs. IFN is administered by subcutaneous injection and inhibits viral replication and enhances the immune response to the virus. The nucleoside/nucleotide analogues are given orally and work through incorporation into viral DNA causing chain termination and inhibiting viral replication. For HBeAg-positive disease, IFN is given for 1 year and the oral antiviral agents are given long term. HBeAg-negative disease (indicating a mutant) requires long-term treatment with oral agents.

## Hepatitis B and HIV co-infection

Routes of infection are similar for HBV and the human immunodeficiency virus and rates of co-infection are 10–20%. All patients with chronic HBV infection should have a test for HIV antibody and vice versa. Testing should be repeated if there is ongoing risk of HIV, particularly before antiviral treatment for HBV is contemplated. HIV infection makes it more likely that an individual exposed to HBV will develop chronic infection and this will progress to more severe liver disease. Treatment of co-infection is complex and is best managed in a specialist unit.

## Prophylaxis

The avoidance of high-risk factors (needle sharing, prostitutes and multiple male homosexual partners) and counselling patients who are potentially infective are key aspects of prevention. Active immunization with a recombinant yeast vaccine is universal in most developed countries. In the UK it is only recommended for those at increased risk, e.g. healthcare workers, homosexual and bisexual men and prostitutes, intravenous drug users, people with haemophilia and haemodialysis patients. The immunity that develops after active immunization lasts for over 10 years. Combined prophylaxis (i.e. active immunization and passive immunization with specific antihepatitis B

immunoglobulin) is given to non-immune individuals after high-risk exposure, e.g. a needle-stick injury from a carrier, newborn babies of HBsAg-positive mothers and HBV-negative sexual partners of HBsAg-positive patients.

### Hepatitis D (delta or $\delta$ agent)<sup>nd</sup>

Hepatitis D virus (HDV) is an incomplete RNA virus enclosed in a shell of HBsAg. It is unable to replicate on its own, but is activated by the presence of HBV. It can affect all risk groups for HBV infection, but is seen particularly in intravenous drug users. Infection can occur as a co-infection with HBV or as a superinfection in an already HBsAg-positive patient, and thus presents as an illness indistinguishable from acute HBV infection or as a flare-up (with a rise in serum transferases) of previously quiescent chronic HBV infection. Diagnosis is by finding HDV RNA or IgM anti-HDV in the serum.

### Hepatitis C<sup>nd</sup>

#### Epidemiology

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is present world-wide, but is more common in southern Europe, Africa and Egypt. In the UK, the main mode of acquisition is via recreational intravenous drug use and in developing countries via transfusion of blood products and exposure to poorly sterilized instruments (Table 4.3). There are six viral genotypes, of which type 1 is the most common in Europe and the USA.

#### Clinical features

Acute infection is usually mild, with jaundice developing in less than 10% of cases. Most patients infected with HCV go on to develop chronic liver disease and will not be diagnosed until they present, years later, with elevated serum aminotransferase levels found on routine biochemistry (e.g. at health checks) or with symptoms and signs of chronic liver disease and cirrhosis (Fig. 4.1). Patients with cirrhosis secondary to chronic HCV are at increased risk for the development of HCC. Extrahepatic manifestations of chronic infection include arthritis, glomerulonephritis associated with cryoglobulinaemia, and porphyria cutanea tarda.

#### Diagnosis

This is made by finding HCV antibody in the serum. Antibodies may take 8 weeks to appear after acute infection, and thus an early negative result does not exclude acute HCV infection. Patients with antibodies to HCV should undergo further tests to look for the presence of HCV RNA in the serum. A positive RNA result indicates ongoing infection and HCV genotype should be characterized in those considered for treatment. A liver biopsy is performed if treatment is dependent on the degree of hepatitis but is not always

necessary. Non-invasive testing (p. 143) is also used to assess the stage of fibrosis/cirrhosis without the need for biopsy.

## Management

All patients with chronic infection are candidates for antiviral therapy but the risks and benefits of treatment must be carefully weighed on an individual basis. The aim of treatment is sustained viral clearance, i.e. the absence of HCV RNA in the serum 6 months after treatment. For genotypes 2 and 3 this is achieved in 80% of patients and most patients, even those with mild disease, are treated. In patients with less responsive genotypes (1 and 4, sustained viral clearance 40–50%) treatment is given to those with moderate or severe activity/fibrosis on liver biopsy. Treatment is with subcutaneous pegylated IFN- $\alpha$  once weekly and oral ribavirin daily for 24 weeks (genotypes 3 and 4) or 48 weeks (genotypes 1 and 4).

## Hepatitis E<sup>nd</sup>

This is due to an RNA virus which causes enteral (epidemic or water-borne) hepatitis, similar to hepatitis A, particularly in developing countries (Table 4.3). Diagnosis is by detection of IgG and IgM anti-HEV in the serum or HEV RNA in serum or stools.

## Fulminant hepatic failure

This is hepatic failure with encephalopathy (a neuropsychiatric condition developing as a consequence of liver disease) developing in *less than 2 weeks* in a patient with a previously normal liver, or in patients with an acute exacerbation of underlying liver disease. Cases that evolve at a slower pace (*2–12 weeks*) are called subacute or subfulminant hepatic failure. It is an infrequent complication of acute liver damage from any cause (Fig. 4.5) and occurs as a result of massive liver cell necrosis. In the UK, viral hepatitis and paracetamol overdose are the most common causes. Presentation is with hepatic encephalopathy (Table 4.5) of varying severity accompanied by severe jaundice and a marked coagulopathy. The complications include cerebral oedema, hypoglycaemia, severe bacterial and fungal infections, hypotension and renal failure (hepatorenal syndrome). Most patients should be managed with supportive treatment in a specialist liver unit (Table 4.6). Emergency liver transplantation has become a useful treatment, depending on the cause, for the very severe cases (grade IV encephalopathy), of which 80% might otherwise die.

## Autoimmune hepatitis

Autoimmune hepatitis is usually a progressive liver disease which is often associated with other autoimmune diseases, e.g. pernicious anaemia,

**Table 4.5** Clinical grading of hepatic encephalopathy

| Grade | Neurological findings   |
|-------|---|
| 0     | No alteration in consciousness, intellectual function, personality or behaviour                   |
| 1     | Daytime somnolence, short attention span, mild asterixis*   |
| 2     | Lethargic, drowsiness, disorientated usually in time, inappropriate behaviour, obvious asterixis* |
| 3     | Asleep but rousable, confusion, incomprehensible speech   |
| 4     | Coma  |

\*Asterixis (liver flap), involuntary flapping movements of the hand when the arm is extended and wrist held in a backward position.

**Table 4.6** Transfer criteria for patients with acute liver injury to specialized units

|  |
|--|
| International normalized ratio >3.0  |
| Presence of hepatic encephalopathy   |
| Hypotension after resuscitation with fluid                                     |
| Metabolic acidosis   |
| Prothrombin time (seconds) >interval (hours) from overdose (paracetamol cases) |

thyroiditis. It is most common in young and middle-aged women but can occur in any age in either sex.

## Aetiology

The aetiology is unknown but the disease is characterized by immunological abnormalities including hypergammaglobulinaemia with high IgG levels, the presence of circulating autoantibodies and interface hepatitis with portal plasma cell infiltration on liver histology.

## Clinical features

The onset is often insidious, with anorexia, malaise, nausea and fatigue. Twenty-five per cent present as an acute hepatitis, with rapidly progressive liver disease. The signs of chronic liver disease are often present, with palmar erythema, spider naevi, hepatosplenomegaly and jaundice. Features of other autoimmune diseases may be present.

## Investigations

Circulating autoantibodies (antinuclear, smooth muscle, soluble liver antigen, liver/kidney microsomal antibodies) are present in most patients. There is hypergammaglobulinaemia (particularly IgG), and serum bilirubin and aminotransferases are elevated. Liver histology will show the non-specific changes of chronic hepatitis, with interface hepatitis and often cirrhosis.

## Treatment

Prednisolone 30 mg daily is given for 2–3 weeks. A subsequent reduction in the dose depends on clinical response, but maintenance doses of 10–15 mg are usually required. Azathioprine should be added as a steroid-sparing agent and is usually continued lifelong. Mycophenolate, ciclosporin and tacrolimus are used in treatment failures.

## Prognosis

Steroid and azathioprine therapy induce remission in over 80% of cases. Liver transplantation may be necessary if treatment fails although the disease can recur.

## NON-ALCOHOLIC FATTY LIVER DISEASE (NAFLD)

The liver biopsy findings show changes indistinguishable from those ascribed to alcohol excess but they occur in the absence of heavy drinking. Non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) is an advanced form of NAFLD, characterized by hepatic steatosis associated with varying degrees of hepatocellular injury, inflammation and fibrosis that can progress to cirrhosis and HCC. Fatty liver is frequently associated with obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension and hyperlipidaemia, such that NAFLD is considered the liver component of the metabolic syndrome. The exact pathogenesis is not known but it is thought that insulin resistance is a key mechanism leading to fatty liver and then a 'second hit' or oxidative injury is required to manifest the inflammatory component or steatohepatitis.

## Clinical features

Most patients with NAFLD are asymptomatic and the most common presentation is mild elevations of aminotransferases discovered on routine laboratory testing. Hepatomegaly is a frequent finding on clinical examination.

## Investigations

Ultrasonography often shows a hyperechoic texture or bright liver because of diffuse fatty infiltration. Similarly CT and MRI can show fatty liver but the findings are non-specific. Other causes of chronic liver disease should be excluded (Table 4.1). The degree of liver fibrosis/cirrhosis is assessed by non-invasive testing (p. 143); sometimes liver biopsy is necessary.

## Management

There is no proven effective therapy for NASH and management centres on treatment of risk factors such as obesity (see above). Transplantation may be needed for end-stage disease.

## CIRRHOSIS

Cirrhosis results from necrosis of liver cells followed by fibrosis and nodule formation. The end result is impairment of liver cell function and gross distortion of the liver architecture, leading to portal hypertension.

### Aetiology

The causes of cirrhosis are shown in Table 4.1. Alcohol is the most common cause in the Western world, but hepatitis B and C are the most common causes world-wide.

### Pathology

Histologically, two types are described:

- **Micronodular cirrhosis:** uniform, small nodules up to 3 mm in diameter. This type is often caused by ongoing alcohol damage or biliary tract disease.
- **Macronodular cirrhosis:** nodules of variable size and normal acini may be seen within large nodules. This type is often seen following chronic viral hepatitis.

There is also a mixed picture, with both small and large nodules.

### Clinical features

These are secondary to portal hypertension and liver cell failure (Fig. 4.1). Cirrhosis with the complications of encephalopathy, ascites or variceal haemorrhage is designated decompensated cirrhosis. Cirrhosis without any of these complications is termed compensated cirrhosis.

### Investigations

These are performed to assess the severity of liver disease, identify the aetiology and screen for complications.

### Severity

- Liver biochemistry may be normal. In most cases there is at least a slight elevation of the serum alkaline phosphatase and aminotransferases.
- Full blood count shows thrombocytopenia in most patients at diagnosis with leukopenia and anaemia developing later.
- Liver function. Prothrombin time and serum albumin are the best indicators of liver function (p. 140).
- Serum electrolytes. A low sodium concentration indicates severe liver disease secondary to either impaired free water clearance or excess diuretic therapy. An elevated serum creatinine is associated with a worse prognosis.

- Serum  $\alpha$ -fetoprotein (AFP). This is usually undetectable after fetal life, but raised levels may occur in chronic liver disease. A level greater than 200 ng/mL is strongly suggestive of the presence of an HCC, developing as a complication of cirrhosis.

## Aetiology

Cirrhosis develops in response to chronic liver injury from any cause which is often apparent from the history combined with laboratory investigations (Table 4.1). A liver biopsy is performed to confirm the severity and type of liver disease.

## Further investigations

Oesophageal varices are sought with endoscopy and primary prophylaxis (p. 165) to reduce bleeding offered to those with varices. An US is useful for detection of HCC, and to assess the patency of the portal and hepatic veins (p. 177). A dual energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA) scan is performed for osteoporosis.

## Management

Cirrhosis is irreversible and frequently progresses. Management is that of the complications seen in decompensated cirrhosis as they arise. Correcting the underlying cause, e.g. venesection for haemochromatosis, abstinence from alcohol for alcoholic cirrhosis, may halt the progression of liver disease. Screening for HCC (measurement of serum AFP and US every 6 months) is performed to identify tumours at an early stage. Liver transplantation should be considered in patients with end-stage cirrhosis. Patients should also be offered influenza immunization.

## Prognosis

This is variable and depends on the aetiology and presence of complications. The severity and prognosis of liver disease can be graded according to the modified Child–Pugh classification (dependent on five variables: encephalopathy, ascites, prothrombin time, serum bilirubin and albumin) or the MELD score (modification of end-stage liver disease dependent on serum bilirubin and creatinine, and the international normalized ratio [INR]). Overall, the 5-year survival rate is approximately 50%.

## COMPLICATIONS AND EFFECTS OF CIRRHOSIS (Table 4.7)

### Portal hypertension

The portal vein is formed by the union of superior mesenteric (from the gut) and splenic vein (from the spleen) and carries blood to the liver.



**Table 4.7** Complications and effects of cirrhosis

|  |
|--|
| Portal hypertension and gastrointestinal haemorrhage |
| Ascites  |
| Portosystemic encephalopathy                         |
| Acute kidney injury (hepatorenal syndrome)           |
| Hepatopulmonary syndrome                             |
| Hepatocellular carcinoma                             |
| Bacteraemias, infection                              |
| Malnutrition   |
| Osteoporosis   |

**Table 4.8** Causes of portal hypertension

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Prehepatic   | Portal vein thrombosis                       |
| Intrahepatic | Cirrhosis                                    |
|              | Alcoholic hepatitis                          |
|              | Idiopathic non-cirrhotic portal hypertension |
|              | Schistosomiasis                              |
|              | Veno-occlusive disease                       |
| Posthepatic  | Budd–Chiari syndrome                         |
|              | Right heart failure (rare)                   |
|              | Constrictive pericarditis                    |
|              | Inferior vena caval obstruction              |

It accounts for 75% of hepatic vascular inflow; 25% is via the hepatic artery. Blood vessels enter the liver via the hilum (porta hepatis) and blood passes into the hepatic sinusoids via the portal tracts and leaves the liver through the hepatic veins to join the inferior vena cava. The normal portal pressure is 5–8 mmHg. The inflow of portal blood to the liver can be partially or completely obstructed at a number of sites, leading to high pressure proximal to the obstruction and the diversion of blood into portosystemic collaterals, e.g. at the gastro-oesophageal junction (varices), where they are superficial and liable to rupture, causing massive gastrointestinal haemorrhage.

The main sites of obstruction are:

- Prehepatic, due to blockage of the portal vein before the liver
- Intrahepatic, resulting from distortion of the liver architecture
- Posthepatic, due to venous blockage outside of the liver (rare).

## Aetiology

The most common cause (Table 4.8) of portal hypertension is cirrhosis.

## Clinical features

The only evidence of portal hypertension may be splenomegaly in a patient with clinical signs of chronic liver disease. The common presenting features are:

- Gastrointestinal bleeding from oesophageal or less commonly gastric varices
- Ascites
- Hepatic encephalopathy.

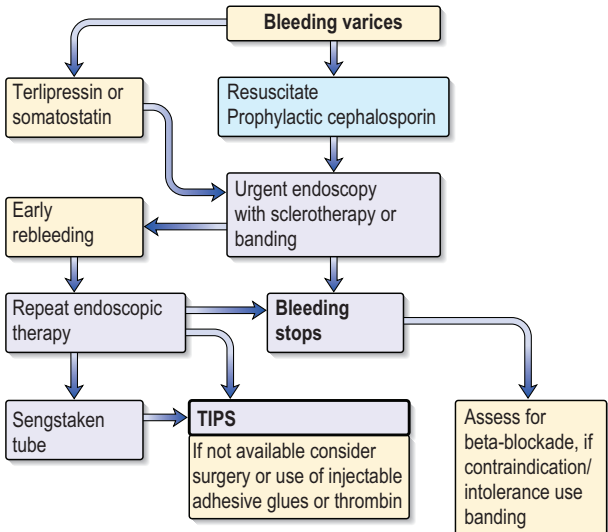
## Variceal haemorrhage

Most patients with cirrhosis will eventually develop varices but only a third will bleed from them. Bleeding is often massive and mortality is as high as 50%.

## Management

The general management of gastrointestinal bleeding is discussed on page 87 and the management of varices is summarized in Fig. 4.7.

**Active bleeding** Patients should be resuscitated and undergo urgent gastroscopy to confirm the diagnosis and exclude bleeding from other sites.



**Fig. 4.7** Management of gastrointestinal haemorrhage due to oesophageal varices. TIPS, transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt.

- Endoscopic therapy is the treatment of choice and will stop bleeding in 80% of cases bleeding from oesophageal varices. The common endoscopic methods are band ligation (small elastic bands are placed over the varices) or sclerotherapy (injection of a sclerosant solution, e.g. ethanolamine, into the varices).
- Pharmacological treatment is used for emergency control of bleeding while waiting for endoscopy and in combination with endoscopic techniques. Terlipressin (a synthetic analogue of vasopressin) restricts portal inflow by splanchnic arterial constriction. It is given by intravenous bolus injection (2 mg 6-hourly) and is contraindicated in patients with ischaemic heart disease. Somatostatin, an intravenous infusion of 250–500 µg/h lowers portal pressure by a similar mechanism to terlipressin but is less effective. It is used when there are contraindications to terlipressin.
- Balloon tamponade with a Sengstaken–Blakemore tube is used if medical or endoscopic treatment described above has failed or contraindicated, or if there is exsanguinating haemorrhage. The gastric balloon is inflated and pulled back against the gastro-oesophageal junction to prevent cephalad variceal blood flow to the bleeding point. It can have serious complications, such as aspiration pneumonia, oesophageal rupture and mucosal ulceration. To reduce complications, the airway should be protected, and the tube left in situ for no longer than 12 hours. It is removed immediately prior to endoscopy.
- TIPS (transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunting) is used when there is a second rebleed after treatment. A metal stent is passed over a guidewire in the internal jugular vein. The stent is then pushed into the liver substance, under radiological guidance, to form a shunt between the portal and hepatic veins, thus lowering portal pressure.
- Surgery (oesophageal transection and ligation of varices) is occasionally necessary if bleeding continues in spite of all the above measures.
- Additional treatment. Patients require high-dependency/ intensive care unit nursing. Antibiotic prophylaxis, e.g. cefotaxime, is given to prevent infection, and reduce rebleeding and early mortality. Lactulose is given to prevent portosystemic encephalopathy, and sucralfate to reduce oesophageal ulceration, a complication of endoscopic therapy.

**Prevention of recurrent variceal bleeding** Following an episode of variceal bleeding there is a high risk of recurrence (60–80% over a 2-year period), and treatment is given to prevent further bleeds (*secondary prophylaxis*). The main options are:

- Oral propranolol (in a dose sufficient to reduce the resting pulse rate by 25%) lowers portal pressure, but some patients are intolerant of treatment because of side-effects. Propranolol is also given to patients with varices who have never bled (*primary prophylaxis*).

- Repeated courses of variceal banding at 2-weekly intervals until the varices are obliterated. Varices may recur so follow-up endoscopy is required.
- TIPS or occasionally a surgical portosystemic shunt is performed if endoscopic or medical therapy fails. Hepatic encephalopathy is a complication of both procedures. Liver transplantation should always be considered when there is poor liver function.

## Ascites

This is the presence of fluid in the peritoneal cavity. Cirrhosis is the commonest cause (Table 4.9).

### Aetiology

In cirrhosis, peripheral arterial vasodilatation (mediated by nitric oxide and other vasodilators) leads to a reduction in effective blood volume, with activation of the sympathetic nervous system and renin–angiotensin system, thus promoting renal salt and water retention. The formation of oedema is encouraged by hypoalbuminaemia and mainly localized to the peritoneal cavity as a result of the portal hypertension.

### Clinical features

There is fullness in the flanks, with shifting dullness. Tense ascites is uncomfortable and produces respiratory distress. A pleural effusion (usually right-sided) and peripheral oedema may be present.

### Investigations

A diagnostic aspiration of 10–20 mL of ascitic fluid should be carried out in all patients, and the following performed:

**Table 4.9** Causes of ascites

| Transudate                          | Exudate                                 |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Portal hypertension, e.g. cirrhosis | Peritoneal carcinomatosis               |
| Hepatic outflow obstruction         | Peritoneal tuberculosis                 |
| Budd–Chiari syndrome                | Pancreatitis                            |
| Hepatic veno-occlusive disease      | Nephrotic syndrome                      |
| Cardiac failure                     | Lymphatic obstruction (chylous ascites) |
| Tricuspid regurgitation             |   |
| Constrictive pericarditis           |   |
| Meig's syndrome*                    |   |

*\*Meig's syndrome is the triad of benign ovarian fibroma, ascites and pleural effusion.*

- Albumin. An ascitic albumin concentration of 11 g/L or more below the serum albumin suggests a transudate; a value of <11 g/L suggests an exudate (Table 4.9).
- A neutrophil count >250 cells/mm<sup>3</sup> in cirrhotic ascites indicates underlying (usually spontaneous) bacterial peritonitis.
- Gram stain and culture for bacteria and acid-fast bacilli.
- Cytology for malignant cells.
- Amylase to exclude pancreatic ascites.

## Management

Treatment depends on the cause. The management of ascites due to portal hypertension is described below. In other cases, ascites will improve with treatment of the underlying condition.

**Diuretics** The management of ascites resulting from cirrhosis is based on a step-wise approach, starting with dietary sodium restriction (40 mmol/day) and oral spironolactone 100 mg daily, increasing gradually to 500 mg daily if necessary. Furosemide (frusemide) 20–40 mg daily is added if the response is poor. The aim of treatment is to lose about 0.5 kg of body weight each day because the maximum rate of transfer of fluid from the ascitic to the vascular compartment is only about 700 mL/day. Too rapid a diuresis causes intravascular volume depletion and hypokalaemia, and precipitates encephalopathy. Efficacy and side effects of treatment is monitored by body weight and serum creatinine and sodium. A rising creatinine level or hyponatraemia indicates inadequate renal perfusion and the need for temporary cessation of diuretic therapy (if sodium <128 mmol/L). This approach to treating ascites is effective in over 90% of patients.

**Paracentesis** is used in patients with tense ascites or who are resistant to standard medical therapy. All the ascites can be removed over several hours providing rapid symptom relief. Intravenous infusion of albumin (8 g/L removed) administered immediately after paracentesis increases the circulating volume (ascites reaccumulates at the expense of the circulating volume).

**Transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt** (TIPS, p. 165) is occasionally used for resistant ascites.

## Complications

Spontaneous bacterial peritonitis (SBP) occurs in 8% of cirrhotic patients with ascites and has a mortality rate of 10–15%. The most common infecting organism is *Escherichia coli*. Clinical features may be minimal and the diagnosis should be suspected in any patient with cirrhotic ascites who deteriorates. Diagnostic aspiration should always be performed and empirical antibiotic therapy with a third generation cephalosporin, e.g. intravenous cefotaxime, is started if the ascitic fluid neutrophil count  $\geq 250$  cells/mm<sup>3</sup>. Antibiotics can subsequently be adjusted on the basis of culture results. Antibiotic prophylaxis with oral norfloxacin is indicated in patients after

one episode or in patients at high risk (ascites protein <10 g/dL or severe liver disease). SBP is also an indication for referral to a liver transplant centre.

## Portosystemic encephalopathy

Portosystemic encephalopathy (PSE) is a neuropsychiatric syndrome which occurs with advanced hepatocellular disease, either chronic (cirrhosis) or acute (fulminant hepatic failure). It is also seen in patients following surgical or TIPS shunts.

### Pathophysiology

The mechanisms are unclear but are believed to involve 'toxic' substances, normally detoxified by the liver, bypassing the liver via the collaterals and gaining access to the brain. Ammonia plays a major role and is produced from breakdown of dietary protein by gut bacteria. In chronic liver disease there is an acute-on-chronic course, with acute episodes precipitated by a number of possible factors (Table 4.10).

### Clinical features

An acute onset often has a precipitating cause; the patient becomes increasingly drowsy and eventually comatose (Table 4.5). There is increased tone and hyperreflexia. Chronically, the patient may be irritable, confused, with slow, slurred speech and a reversal of the sleep pattern, with the patient sleeping during the day and restless at night. The signs are fetor hepaticus (a sweet smell to the breath), a flapping tremor of the outstretched hand (asterixis), inability to draw a five-pointed star (constructional apraxia) and a prolonged trail-making test (the ability to join numbers and letters within a certain time). Serial attempts are easily compared and used to monitor patient progress.

### Differential diagnosis

None of the manifestations of hepatic encephalopathy are specific to this disorder. Alternative diagnoses such as other metabolic or toxic

**Table 4.10** Factors precipitating portosystemic encephalopathy

|   |
|---|
| High dietary protein  |
| Gastrointestinal haemorrhage (i.e. a high protein load)             |
| Constipation  |
| Infection including spontaneous bacterial peritonitis               |
| Fluid and electrolyte disturbance (spontaneous or diuretic-induced) |
| Sedative drugs, e.g. opiates, diazepam                              |
| Portosystemic shunt operations and TIPS                             |
| Any surgical procedure  |
| Progressive liver damage  |
| Development of hepatocellular carcinoma                             |

*TIPS, transjugular intrahepatic portocaval shunt.*

encephalopathies or intracranial mass lesions may present similarly and should be considered.

## Investigations

The diagnosis is clinical. An electroencephalogram (EEG) (showing  $\delta$  waves), visual evoked potentials and arterial blood ammonia are sometimes used in difficult diagnostic cases or to follow patients (ammonia).

## Management

The aims of management are to identify and treat any precipitating factors (Table 4.10) and to minimize the absorption of nitrogenous material, particularly ammonia, from the gut. This is achieved by the following:

- Laxatives. Oral lactulose (10–30 mL three times daily) is an osmotic purgative that reduces colonic pH and limits ammonia absorption. It may be given via a nasogastric tube if the patient is comatose. The dose should be titrated to result in 2–4 soft stools daily.
- Antibiotics are given to reduce the number of bowel organisms and hence production of ammonia. Rifaximin is mainly unabsorbed and well tolerated. Oral metronidazole (200 mg four times daily) is also used.
- Maintenance of nutrition with adequate calories. Protein is initially restricted but increased after 48 hours as encephalopathy improves.

## Prognosis

The prognosis is that of the underlying liver disease.

### Hepatorenal syndrome

This is the development of acute kidney injury in a patient who usually has advanced liver disease, either cirrhosis or alcoholic hepatitis. Marked peripheral vasodilatation leads to a fall in systemic vascular resistance and effective hypovolaemia. This in turn results in vasoconstriction of the renal circulation with markedly reduced renal perfusion. The diagnosis is made on the basis of oliguria, a rising serum creatinine (over days to weeks), a low urine sodium (<10 mmol/L), absence of other causes of acute kidney injury, and lack of improvement after volume expansion (if necessary) and withdrawal of diuretics. The prognosis is poor, and renal failure will often only respond to an improvement in liver function. Albumin infusion and terlipressin have been used with some success.

### Hepatopulmonary syndrome

Intrapulmonary vascular dilatation in patients with advanced liver disease causes hypoxaemia. In severe disease patients are breathless on standing.

Diagnosis is by echocardiogram and the changes improve with liver transplantation.

## LIVER TRANSPLANTATION

Indications for liver transplantation include acute or chronic liver failure of any cause. Triggers for referral in chronic liver disease include progressive jaundice, diuretic resistant ascites, an episode of spontaneous bacterial peritonitis or some cases of HCC. Careful selection of patients is crucial. Psychological assessment and education of patients and their families is essential before transplantation. Absolute contraindications are: active sepsis outside the liver and biliary tree, malignancy outside the liver, liver metastases (except neuroendocrine) and if the patient is not psychologically committed.

With rare exceptions, patients over 65 years are not offered transplants. A 6-month abstinence rule prior to transplantation applies to patients with alcohol-related liver disease with the aim of long-term abstinence after transplantation and improving liver function so that transplantation is not necessary. Graft rejection is reduced by immunosuppressive agents such as ciclosporin. Early complications include haemorrhage, sepsis and acute rejection (<6 weeks), which is reversible with methylprednisolone. Late complications include recurrence of disease (hepatitis B and C, autoimmune liver disease), chronic rejection (the 'vanishing bile duct syndrome') and the consequences of immune suppression (malignancy, cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus). Overall the 5-year survival rate after liver transplantation is 70–85%.

## TYPES OF CHRONIC LIVER DISEASE AND CIRRHOSIS

### Alcoholic cirrhosis

See alcoholic liver disease (p. 174).

### Primary biliary cirrhosis

Primary biliary cirrhosis (PBC) is a chronic disorder in which there is progressive destruction of intrahepatic bile ducts causing cholestasis, eventually leading to cirrhosis.

### Epidemiology

It affects predominantly women in the age range 40–50 years.

### Aetiology

An inherited abnormality of immunoregulation, leads to a T lymphocyte mediated attack on bile duct epithelial cells. It is thought that disease expression



results from an environmental trigger, possibly infective, in a genetically susceptible individual. Antimitochondrial antibodies (AMAs) are present in most (>95%) patients, but their role in disease pathogenesis is unclear.

## Clinical features

Pruritus, with or without jaundice, is the single most common presenting complaint. In advanced disease there is, in addition, hepatosplenomegaly and xanthelasma (PBC is a cause of secondary hypercholesterolaemia). Asymptomatic patients may be discovered on routine examination or screening to have hepatomegaly, a raised serum alkaline phosphatase or autoantibodies. Patients with advanced disease may have steatorrhoea and malabsorption of fat-soluble vitamins owing to decreased biliary secretion of bile acids and the resulting low concentrations of bile acids in the small intestine. Auto-immune disorders, e.g. Sjögren's syndrome, scleroderma and rheumatoid arthritis, occur with increased frequency.

## Investigations

- A raised serum alkaline phosphatase is often the only abnormality in liver biochemistry.
- Serum AMAs are found in more than 95% of patients and a titre of 1 : 160 or greater makes the diagnosis highly likely. M2 antibody is specific. Other non-specific antibodies, e.g. antinuclear factor, may also be present.
- Serum IgM may be high.
- Liver biopsy shows loss of bile ducts, lymphocyte infiltration of the portal tracts, granuloma formation in 40% and, at a later stage, fibrosis and eventually cirrhosis.
- An US scan is sometimes performed in the jaundiced patient to exclude extrahepatic biliary obstruction.

PBC is almost certainly present if the serum alkaline phosphatase and IgM concentrations are both raised and the antimitochondrial antibody test is positive. Liver biopsy provides information about disease stage and prognosis, but is not essential to make the diagnosis.

## Management

Treatment is with lifelong ursodeoxycholic acid (10–15 mg/kg daily by mouth), a naturally occurring dihydroxy bile acid. It slows disease progression and reduces the need for liver transplantation. The mechanism of benefit is incompletely understood. It should be given early in the asymptomatic phase. Pruritus may be helped by colestyramine, and malabsorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, K) is treated by supplementation. Liver transplantation is indicated for patients with advanced disease (serum bilirubin persistently >100  $\mu\text{mol/L}$ ).

## Prognosis

Asymptomatic patients may show a near-normal life expectancy. In symptomatic patients with jaundice there is a steady downhill course, with death in approximately 5 years without transplantation.

## Secondary biliary cirrhosis

Cirrhosis can result from prolonged (for months) large duct biliary obstruction. Causes include bile duct strictures, CBD stones and sclerosing cholangitis. US examination followed by MRCP is performed to outline the ducts. ERCP may then be necessary to treat the cause, e.g. stone removal.

## Hereditary haemochromatosis

Hereditary haemochromatosis (HH) is an autosomal recessive disorder with a prevalence in the Caucasian population of 1 in 400, with approximately 10% of the population being gene carriers. There is excess iron deposition in various organs, leading to eventual fibrosis and functional organ failure.

## Aetiology

HH is characterized by inappropriately increased iron absorption from the upper small intestine. In most cases, HH is due to a mutation in the gene *HFE* on the short arm of chromosome 6. The normal HFE protein is expressed in the small intestine and plays a role in the regulation of iron absorption. Two missense mutations of the *HFE* gene account for most patients with HH: a change of cysteine at position 282 for tyrosine (C282Y mutation) or a change of histidine at position 63 to aspartate (H63D mutation). Human leucocyte antigen (HLA)-A3, -B7 and -B14 occur with increased frequency in patients with HH compared with the general population. In a minority of patients, iron overload is due to defects in other proteins involved in iron metabolism.

## Clinical features

Most patients are diagnosed when elevated serum iron or ferritin levels are noted on routine biochemistry, or screening is performed because a relative is diagnosed with HH. Presentation may also be with symptoms and signs of iron loading in parenchymal organs (Table 4.11). There is a reduced incidence of overt disease in women because of extra iron losses associated with menstruation and a smaller dietary intake of iron.

**Table 4.11** Clinical presentation of haemochromatosis**Health screening (often symptomatic)**

Abnormal liver biochemistry  
 Abnormal iron studies  
 Familial and/or population screening

**Symptomatic disease due to iron deposition in:**

- **Liver:** hepatomegaly, lethargy
- **Pancreas:** diabetes mellitus
- **Myocardium:** cardiomegaly, heart failure, conduction disturbances
- **Pituitary:** loss of libido, impotence
- **Joints:** arthralgia
- **Skin:** hyperpigmentation

## Investigations

- Serum liver biochemistry is often normal even with cirrhosis.
- Serum iron is elevated and total iron-binding capacity (TIBC) reduced. Transferrin saturation (serum iron/TIBC) is >45% (normal <33%).
- Serum ferritin reflects iron stores and is usually greatly elevated (often >500 µg/L).
- Genotyping (by PCR reaction using whole blood samples) for mutation analysis of the *HFE* gene is performed in patients with elevated ferritin and transferrin saturation.
- Patients with abnormal iron studies and mutations of the *HFE* gene are treated by phlebotomy without the need for liver biopsy. Assessment of the degree of fibrosis is performed by non-invasive tests (p. 143) or liver biopsy in patients who are predicted to have significant hepatic injury (abnormal liver biochemistry or serum ferritin >1000 µg/L). Liver biopsy and measurement of hepatic iron content is performed if the diagnosis is in doubt.

Causes of secondary iron overload, such as multiple transfusions, must be excluded. In addition, in alcoholic liver disease hepatic iron stores may increase. The precise reason is unknown, but the hepatic iron concentration does not reach the very high levels seen in haemochromatosis.

## Management

Excess tissue iron is removed by venesection: 500 mL of blood (containing 250 mg of iron) are removed twice-weekly until iron stores are normalized as assessed by serum ferritin and transferrin saturation. This may need to be continued for up to 2 years and then three or four venesections per year are required lifelong to prevent the reaccumulation of iron. Surveillance (p. 162) for HCC is performed in patients with cirrhosis.

Genotyping to detect *HFE* mutations and iron studies should be performed on first-degree relatives of affected individuals.

## Prognosis

The major complication is the development of HCC in patients with cirrhosis. This can be prevented by venesection before cirrhosis develops, and life expectancy is then much the same as for the normal population.

### Wilson's disease (hepatolenticular degeneration)

This is a rare, recessively inherited disorder. Mutations in the *ATP7B* gene on chromosome 13 result in decreased secretion of copper into the biliary system and reduced incorporation of copper into procaeruloplasmin, the precursor of caeruloplasmin. Copper accumulates in the liver (leading to fulminant hepatic failure and cirrhosis), basal ganglia of the brain (parkinsonism and eventual dementia), cornea (greenish-brown rings called Kayser–Fleischer rings) and renal tubules. Diagnosis is made by demonstrating low total serum copper and caeruloplasmin, increased 24-hour urinary copper excretion and increased copper in a liver biopsy specimen. Treatment is with penicillamine or trientine (to chelate copper) or zinc (reduces copper absorption). Liver transplantation is offered to those with end-stage liver disease or fulminant hepatic failure. First-degree relatives are screened and homozygotes should be treated.

### $\alpha_1$ -antitrypsin deficiency

This is a rare cause of cirrhosis. Mutations in the  $\alpha_1$ -antitrypsin ( $\alpha_1$ -AT) gene on chromosome 14 lead to reduced hepatic production of  $\alpha_1$ -AT, which normally inhibits the proteolytic enzyme, neutrophil elastase. The genetic variants of  $\alpha_1$ -AT are characterized by their electrophoretic mobilities as medium (M), slow (S) or very slow (Z). The normal genotype is PiMM. Most patients with clinical disease are homozygote for Z (PiZZ) and develop chronic liver disease (due to accumulation of the abnormal protein within the liver) and early-onset emphysema due to proteolytic lung damage. Diagnosis is made by demonstrating low serum levels of serum  $\alpha_1$ -AT and confirmed by genotype assessment. On liver histology,  $\alpha_1$ -AT-containing globules are seen in hepatocytes. Treatment is for chronic lung and liver disease. Intravenous augmentation therapy with plasma derived  $\alpha_1$ -AT is used but not widely available. Patients should be advised to stop smoking.

### Alcohol and the liver

Alcohol is the most common cause of chronic liver disease in the Western world. Alcoholic liver disease occurs more commonly in men, usually in the fourth and fifth decades, although subjects can present in their 20s with

advanced disease. Although alcohol acts as a hepatotoxin, the exact mechanism leading to hepatitis and cirrhosis is unknown. As only 10–20% of people who drink excessively develop cirrhosis, genetic predisposition and immunological mechanisms have been proposed.

There are three major pathological lesions and clinical illnesses associated with excessive alcohol intake.

## Fatty change

This is the most common biopsy finding in alcoholic individuals. Regular alcohol use, even for a few weeks, can result in fatty liver (steatosis), a disorder in which hepatocytes contain macrovesicular droplets of triglycerides. Symptoms are usually absent, and on examination there may be hepatomegaly. Laboratory tests are often normal, although an elevated mean corpuscular volume (MCV) often indicates heavy drinking. The  $\gamma$ -GT level is usually elevated. The fat disappears on cessation of alcohol intake, but with continued drinking there may be progress to fibrosis and cirrhosis.

## Alcoholic hepatitis

Alcoholic hepatitis generally occurs after years of heavy drinking and may coexist with cirrhosis. Histologically, in addition to steatosis (see above), there are ballooned (swollen) hepatocytes that often contain amorphous eosinophilic material called Mallory bodies, surrounded by neutrophils. There may be fibrosis and foamy degeneration of hepatocytes.

## Clinical features

The cardinal sign of alcoholic hepatitis is a rapid onset of jaundice. Other symptoms and signs are nausea, anorexia, right upper quadrant pain, encephalopathy, fever, ascites and tender hepatomegaly.

## Investigations

- Full blood count shows leucocytosis, elevated MCV and often thrombocytopenia (resulting from bone marrow hypoplasia and/or hypersplenism associated with portal hypertension).
- Serum electrolytes are frequently abnormal with hyponatraemia. An elevated serum creatinine is an ominous sign and may predict the development of hepatorenal syndrome.
- Liver biochemistry shows elevated AST and ALT with a disproportionate rise in AST (usually AST:ALT ratio  $>2$ ) and the absolute values for AST and ALT usually  $<500$  IU/L; higher values suggest acute hepatitis due to another cause (p. 148). The bilirubin may be markedly elevated, 300–500  $\mu\text{mol/L}$ , reflecting the severity of the illness. Serum albumin is low and prothrombin time prolonged.

- Microscopy and culture of blood, urine and ascites is performed to search for an underlying infection.
- US (liver and biliary) is useful to identify biliary obstruction and HCC, which may present similarly.
- Liver biopsy (often via the transjugular approach because of the abnormal clotting) is not always required. Diagnosis is usually made on the basis of clinical presentation, neutrophilia, elevated INR and liver biochemistry profile.

## Management

Patients with severe alcoholic hepatitis require supportive treatment (p. 158) and adequate nutritional intake must be maintained, if necessary via a nasogastric tube. Corticosteroids (40 mg per day for four weeks) reduce the inflammatory process and are indicated if Maddrey's discriminant function  $\geq 32$ , indicating severe disease:

**[4.6 × (prothrombin time above control in seconds)  
+ bilirubin (mg/dL)]**

**Bilirubin  $\mu\text{mol/L} \div 17$  to convert to mg/dL**

Steroids are contraindicated if renal failure, infection or bleeding. Pentoxifylline, a phosphodiesterase inhibitor with many effects including modulation of TNF- $\alpha$  transcription, also reduces mortality, thought mainly by prevention of hepatorenal syndrome.

## Alcoholic cirrhosis

This represents the final stage of liver disease from alcohol abuse. There is destruction of liver architecture and fibrosis, with regenerating nodules producing micronodular cirrhosis. Patients may be asymptomatic, although they often present with one of the complications of cirrhosis and there are usually signs of chronic liver disease (p. 144). Investigation is as for cirrhosis in general (p. 161). Management is directed at the complications of cirrhosis, and patients are advised to stop drinking for life. Abstinence from alcohol improves the 5-year survival rate.

## PRIMARY SCLEROSING CHOLANGITIS

Primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC) is a chronic cholestatic liver disease characterized by a progressive obliterating fibrosis of intra- and extrahepatic ducts, eventually leading to cirrhosis. It is of unknown cause; 75% or more cases have ulcerative colitis, which may be asymptomatic. Patients are often diagnosed during an asymptomatic phase after routine blood testing in a patient with inflammatory bowel disease reveals abnormal liver biochemistry, often a raised alkaline phosphatase. Symptomatic presentation is with

pruritus, jaundice or cholangitis. Sixty per cent of patients have myeloperoxidase antineutrophilic cytoplasmic antibodies (ANCA) (p. 299). Diagnosis is usually by MRCP or liver biopsy. Treatment is usually limited to management of complications arising from chronic liver disease with eventual liver transplantation. Extrahepatic strictures may be amenable to dilatation at ERCP. High-dose ursodeoxycholic acid (30 mg/kg) may slow disease progression. Cholangiocarcinoma (bile duct cancer) occurs in up to 15% of patients. Sclerosing cholangitis secondary to *Cryptosporidium* infection is seen in patients with acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

## BUDD–CHIARI SYNDROME

In this syndrome, occlusion of the hepatic vein obstructs venous outflow from the liver and the resulting stasis and congestion within the liver lead to hypoxic damage and necrosis of hepatocytes.

### Aetiology

The commonest cause is a hypercoaguable state associated with myeloproliferative disorders, malignancy, oral contraceptives and inherited thrombophilias. The cause is unknown in 20% of cases.

### Clinical features

Clinical manifestations depend on the extent and rapidity of the hepatic vein occlusion and whether a venous collateral circulation has developed. Right upper quadrant pain, hepatomegaly, jaundice and ascites are typical features. Acute disease may also present with fulminant hepatic failure. Cirrhosis may develop in the chronically congested liver resulting in portal hypertension and the development of varices and other features of portal hypertension (p. 162). A clinical picture similar to Budd–Chiari may develop in right-sided cardiac failure, inferior vena cava obstruction or constrictive pericarditis.

### Investigations

Doppler US is the initial investigation of choice. This will show abnormal flow in the major hepatic veins or inferior vena cava and thickening, tortuosity, and dilatation of the walls of the hepatic veins. Non-specific findings include hepatomegaly, splenomegaly, ascites and caudate lobe hypertrophy. CT or MRI may demonstrate abnormalities of the hepatic veins if the US is normal and clinical suspicion is high. Liver biopsy is not usually necessary to make the diagnosis but will show centrilobular congestion, necrosis and haemorrhage.

### Treatment

The goals of therapy are three-fold:

- To restore hepatic venous drainage. This is usually only feasible in the acute situation and includes thrombolysis, angioplasty and stent insertion, or TIPS.
- Treatment of complications related to ascites and portal hypertension (p. 162)
- Detection of the underlying hypercoagulable disorder and prevention of further clot formation.

## LIVER ABSCESS

Liver abscesses are pyogenic, amoebic or hydatid (p. 41).

### Aetiology

The cause of pyogenic liver abscess is often unknown, although biliary sepsis or portal pyaemia from intra-abdominal sepsis may be responsible. Other causes include trauma, bacteraemia or direct extension from, for example, a perinephric abscess. The organism found most commonly is *E. coli*. *Streptococcus milleri* and anaerobic organisms such as *Bacteroides* are often seen. An amoebic abscess results from spread of the organism *Entamoeba histolytica* from the bowel to the liver via the portal venous system.

### Clinical features

There are non-specific symptoms of fever, lethargy, weight loss and abdominal pain. The liver may be enlarged and tender and there may be consolidation or an effusion in the right side of the chest. Patients with amoebic abscess often do not give a history of dysentery.

### Investigations

- Laboratory abnormalities reflect the non-specific findings of infection including anaemia, raised ESR and low albumin. Serum alkaline phosphatase is usually raised and bilirubin often normal.
- An US will show single or multiple rounded lesions that are hypoechoic in relation to the surrounding liver. CT is diagnostic and shows the abscesses as non-enhancing cavities with a surrounding rim of inflammation that enhances in relation to the rest of the liver.
- Serological tests for amoebae, e.g. complement-fixation test or enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), are almost always positive with amoebic abscess.

### Management

**Amoebic liver abscess** diagnosed on the basis of clinical and radiological features (migrants from, and travellers to endemic countries and who have a single abscess in the right lobe of the liver) is treated with metronidazole



(800 mg three times daily by mouth for 10 days) without the need for aspiration of the abscess.

**Pyogenic abscess** should have percutaneous aspiration under radiological control and usually placement of a pigtail catheter for continued drainage. Initial antibiotic therapy (intravenous metronidazole and cefuroxime) is subsequently altered depending on the organisms obtained from aspiration.

## LIVER DISEASE IN PREGNANCY

Viral hepatitis is the single most common cause of jaundice in pregnancy. Three types of liver disease are specific to pregnancy: intrahepatic cholestasis (presenting with pruritus, elevated liver enzymes and increased serum bile acids); acute fatty liver of pregnancy (a severe fulminating illness with jaundice, vomiting and hepatic coma); and haemolysis (occasionally producing jaundice), which occurs in pre-eclamptic toxæmia. The three conditions present most commonly in the third trimester and resolve with delivery of the baby.

## LIVER TUMOURS

The most common malignant liver tumours are metastatic, particularly those from the gastrointestinal tract, breast or bronchus. Primary liver tumours may be either benign or malignant. Liver cysts and haemangiomas are common and may be confused with tumours on initial imaging; they usually need no further treatment.

## Hepatocellular carcinoma (hepatoma)

HCC is the fifth most common cancer world-wide. The differences in geographical distribution of HCC are probably due to regional variations in exposure to hepatitis B and C virus, and environmental pathogens.

### Aetiology

The majority of HCCs occur in patients with chronic liver disease or cirrhosis, particularly due to viral hepatitis. Other aetiological factors include aflatoxin (a metabolite of a fungus found in groundnuts), androgenic steroids and, possibly the contraceptive pill.

### Clinical features

Weight loss, anorexia, fever, ascites and abdominal pain occur. The rapid development of these features in a patient with cirrhosis is highly suggestive of HCC. Because of surveillance, by measurement of serum AFP and liver US, asymptomatic HCC is being found increasingly in asymptomatic patients with

known cirrhosis. A focal lesion in the liver in a patient with cirrhosis is highly likely to be HCC.

## Investigations

- Serum AFP may be raised but is normal in at least a third of patients.
- US or CT scanning shows large filling defects in 90% of cases.
- MRI or angiography is useful in cases where there is diagnostic doubt.
- Biopsy is only performed when there is diagnostic doubt, as there is a risk of tumour seeding in the percutaneous needle biopsy tract. For instance, in a patient with cirrhosis and a liver mass greater than 2 cm in diameter, the lesion is almost certainly HCC and biopsy is not indicated.

## Management

Surgical resection or liver transplantation is occasionally possible. Percutaneous ablative therapies using ethanol injection or high frequency US probes will produce necrosis of the tumour. Transarterial chemoembolization involves the injection of a chemotherapeutic agent and Lipiodol into the hepatic artery. It is used in the treatment of large unresectable tumours. Chemotherapy given intravenously has a very limited role.

## Prognosis

Overall, the median survival is only 6–20 months.

### Benign liver tumours

The most common are haemangiomas, usually found incidentally on a liver US or CT scan. They require no treatment. Hepatic adenomas are less common and associated with use of oral contraceptives. Resection is required if there are symptoms (e.g. pain, intraperitoneal bleeding).

## GALLSTONES

Gallstones are present in 10–20% of the population. They are most common in women, and the prevalence increases with age.

## Pathophysiology

Gallstones are of two types:

- *Cholesterol gallstones* account for 80% of all gallstones in the Western world. Cholesterol is held in solution by the detergent action of bile salts and phospholipids, with which it forms micelles and vesicles. Cholesterol gallstones only form in bile which has an excess of cholesterol, either because there is a relative deficiency of bile salts and phospholipids or

a relative excess of cholesterol (supersaturated or lithogenic bile). The formation of cholesterol crystals and gallstones in lithogenic bile is promoted by factors that favour nucleation, such as mucus and calcium. Gallstone formation is further promoted by reduced gall bladder motility and stasis. The mechanism of cholesterol gallstone formation in patients with risk factors (Table 4.12) is frequently multifactorial (cholesterol supersaturation, nucleation factors and reduced gallbladder motility).

- *Pigment stones* consist of bilirubin polymers and calcium bilirubinate. They are seen in patients with chronic haemolysis, e.g. hereditary spherocytosis and sickle cell disease, in which bilirubin production is increased, and also in cirrhosis. Pigment stones may also form in the bile ducts after cholecystectomy and with duct strictures.

## Clinical presentation

Most gallstones never cause symptoms, and cholecystectomy is not indicated in asymptomatic cases. The complications are summarized in Fig. 4.8.

### Biliary pain

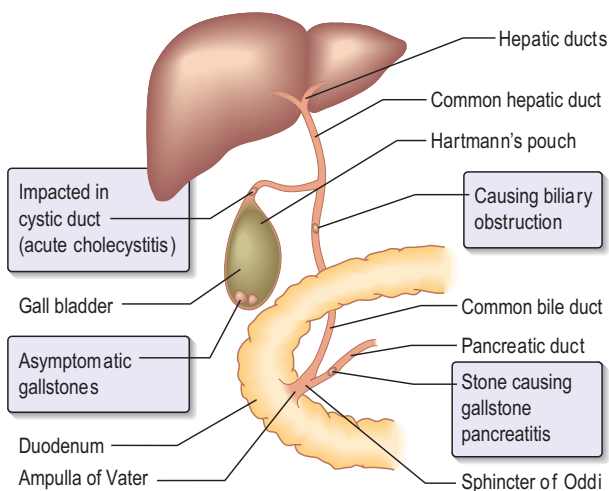
Biliary pain (colic) is the term used for the pain associated with the temporary obstruction of the cystic or CBD by a stone.

## Clinical features

There are recurrent episodes of severe constant pain in the upper abdomen, which subsides after several hours. The pain may radiate to the right shoulder and right subscapular region and is often associated with vomiting. Examination is usually normal.

**Table 4.12** Risk factors for cholesterol gallstones

|  |
|--|
| Increasing age   |
| Sex (F > M)  |
| Family history   |
| Multiparity  |
| Obesity ± metabolic syndrome                           |
| Rapid weight loss                                      |
| Diet (e.g. high in animal fat/low fibre)               |
| Ileal disease or resection (leading to bile salt loss) |
| Diabetes mellitus                                      |
| Acromegaly treated with octreotide                     |
| Liver cirrhosis  |



**Fig. 4.8** The complications of gallstones.

## Investigations

The diagnosis is usually made on the basis of a typical history and an US showing gallstones. Increases of serum alkaline phosphatase and bilirubin during an attack support the diagnosis of biliary pain. The absence of inflammatory features (fever, white cell count and local peritonism) differentiates this from acute cholecystitis.

## Management

The treatment is analgesia and elective cholecystectomy. Abnormal liver biochemistry or a dilated CBD on ultrasonography is an indication for pre-operative MRCP. CBD stones identified on imaging are removed at ERCP or sometimes at the same time as cholecystectomy.

### Acute cholecystitis

Acute cholecystitis follows the impaction of a stone in the cystic duct or neck of the gall bladder. Very occasionally acute cholecystitis may occur without stones (acalculous cholecystitis).

### Clinical features

The initial clinical features are similar to those of biliary colic. However, over a number of hours there is progression to severe pain localized in the right

upper quadrant, which is associated with a fever and tenderness and muscle guarding on examination. The tenderness is worse on inspiration (Murphy's sign). Complications include an empyema (pus) and perforation with peritonitis. The diagnosis of acute cholecystitis is usually straightforward. The differential diagnosis is from other causes of severe right upper quadrant pain (p. 68).

## Investigations

- White cell count shows leucocytosis.
- Serum liver biochemistry may be mildly abnormal.
- Abdominal US shows gallstones and a distended gall bladder with a thickened wall. There is focal tenderness directly over the visualized gall bladder (sonographic Murphy's sign).

## Management

The initial treatment is conservative, with nil by mouth, intravenous fluids, pain relief and intravenous antibiotics, e.g. cefotaxime. Cholecystectomy is usually performed within 48 hours of the acute attack, and always if complications (see above) develop.

### Chronic cholecystitis

Chronic inflammation of the gall bladder is often found in association with gallstones. On US examination this may appear as a small shrunken gall bladder. There is no evidence that this produces any symptoms, and cholecystectomy is not indicated. Chronic right hypochondrial pain and fatty food intolerance are likely to be functional in origin and gallstones an incidental finding.

### Acute cholangitis

This is an infection of the biliary tree and most often occurs secondary to CBD obstruction by gallstones (choledocholithiasis). Other causes are benign biliary strictures following biliary surgery or associated with chronic pancreatitis, PSC, HIV cholangiopathy (p. 52) and in patients with biliary stents. Bile duct obstruction due to cancer of the head of pancreas or bile duct (cholangiocarcinoma) can also cause cholangitis and this is more likely after ERCP. In the Far East, parts of eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, biliary parasites can cause blockage and cholangitis.

## Clinical features

The classic description of cholangitis with fever, jaundice and right upper quadrant pain (Charcot's triad) is not always present, although most patients have fever often with rigors. Jaundice is cholestatic in type, and therefore

the urine is dark, the stools pale and the skin may itch. Elderly patients may present with non-specific symptoms such as confusion and malaise.

## Investigations

- White cell count shows leucocytosis.
- Blood cultures are positive (*E. coli*, *Enterococcus faecalis*, sometimes anaerobes) in about 30% of patients.
- Liver biochemistry shows a cholestatic picture with a raised serum bilirubin and alkaline phosphatase.
- US shows a dilated CBD and may show the cause of the obstruction.
- MRCP can further assess the site and cause of obstruction.
- ERCP is the definitive investigation and will also allow biliary drainage (see below). It will show the site of obstruction and the cause, and bile can be sampled for culture and cytology (if a malignant cause is suspected).

## Management

Treatment of acute cholangitis includes resuscitation and volume replacement in shocked patients, pain relief, treatment of infection with appropriate intravenous antibiotics and relief of obstruction by biliary drainage. Bacterial infection may be polymicrobial and a suitable antibiotic regimen is a third-generation cephalosporin, e.g. cefotaxime (ciprofloxacin if allergic), plus metronidazole. An alternative regimen is amoxicillin, gentamicin (with appropriate monitoring) and metronidazole. In endemic areas primary parasite infection must also be treated.

Biliary drainage and/or clearance is usually achieved at ERCP with or without sphincterotomy. The urgency of this procedure depends on the clinical condition of the patient and the initial response to antibiotics. Stones can be removed from the CBD, and a stent can be placed in the biliary tree if stones cannot be removed or to relieve obstruction in patients with cancer of the head of pancreas or CBD. Antibiotics are continued after biliary drainage until symptom resolution, usually 7–10 days.

### Common bile duct stones (choledocholithiasis)

CBD stones may also be asymptomatic with no features of cholangitis and present with abnormal liver biochemistry, usually with a cholestatic picture. US will usually show gallbladder stones and may show the obstructed CBD containing a stone. MRCP is more sensitive than transabdominal US and is sometimes performed if there is a high index of suspicion and the latter is negative. An alternative technique for imaging the biliary system is endoscopic US.

## THE PANCREAS

The pancreas has both endocrine and exocrine functions. The islets of Langerhans secrete several hormones directly into the blood stream (endocrine effect) of which insulin and glucagon play a crucial role in the regulation of blood sugar. The pancreatic acinar cells produce pancreatic enzymes (lipase, colipase, amylase and proteases), which pass via the main pancreatic duct into the duodenum and are involved in the digestion of fat, carbohydrate and protein in the small intestine.

## Pancreatitis

Pancreatitis is divided into *acute* and *chronic*. Acute pancreatitis occurs on the background of a previously normal pancreas and the pancreas returns functionally and structurally to normal after the episode. It occurs as isolated or recurrent attacks. In chronic pancreatitis, there is continuing inflammation with irreversible structural changes. In practice, it is not always possible to clearly separate acute from chronic forms because the acute causes (if untreated) may eventually lead to chronic pancreatitis and there may be relapses of the chronic condition – ‘acute-on-chronic pancreatitis’.

## Acute pancreatitis

Acute pancreatitis is a disease of increasing incidence and associated with significant morbidity and mortality. Most patients will recover from the attack with only general supportive care, but 25% will develop severe acute pancreatitis with multiorgan failure and about 20% of these patients may die. The causes of acute pancreatitis are given in Table 4.13.

## Pathogenesis

It is thought that the final common pathway, whatever the initiating cause, is a marked elevation in intracellular calcium leading to activation of intracellular proteases and the release of pancreatic enzymes. Acinar cell injury and necrosis follows, which promotes migration of inflammatory cells from the microcirculation into the interstitium. Release of a variety of mediators and cytokines leads to a local inflammatory response and sometimes a systemic inflammatory response that can result in single or multiple organ failure.

## Clinical features

There is usually epigastric or upper abdominal pain radiating through to the back, associated with nausea and vomiting. On examination there is epigastric or general abdominal tenderness, guarding and rigidity. However, other symptoms (coma, multiorgan failure) may dominate the clinical picture leading to a delay in diagnosis. Ecchymoses around the umbilicus (Cullen’s

**Table 4.13** Causes of pancreatitis

| Acute  | Chronic   |
|--|---|
| Gallstones*  | Alcohol*  |
| Alcohol*   | Tropical  |
| Infections (e.g. mumps, Coxsackie B)   | Autoimmune  |
| Pancreatic tumours   | Idiopathic  |
| Drugs: azathioprine, oestrogens, corticosteroids, didanosine   | Hereditary: Trypsinogen and inhibitory protein defects, cystic fibrosis |
| Iatrogenic: post-surgical, post-ERCP   |   |
| Metabolic: hypercalcaemia, hypertriglyceridaemia   |   |
| Miscellaneous: trauma, scorpion bite, cardiac surgery  |   |
| Idiopathic (unknown cause)   |   |
| <i>*Commonest causes in the Western world.<br/>ERCP, endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography.</i> |   |

sign) or in the flanks (Grey Turner's sign) indicate severe necrotizing pancreatitis.

## Investigation

The purpose of investigation is to make the diagnosis, assess the severity and determine the aetiology.

- Blood tests.** A raised serum amylase or lipase, in conjunction with an appropriate history and clinical signs, strongly indicates a diagnosis of acute pancreatitis. Normal levels of serum amylase occur if the patient presents late when urinary amylase or serum lipase levels may still be raised. Serum amylase may also be moderately raised in other abdominal conditions, such as acute cholecystitis, perforated peptic ulcer and intestinal ischaemia, although very high levels (>3 times normal) are diagnostic of pancreatitis. Full blood count, C-reactive protein (CRP), urea and electrolytes, liver biochemistry, plasma calcium, and arterial blood gases are also measured on admission and at 24 and 48 hours, and used to assess the severity of pancreatitis (Table 4.14).
- Radiology.** An erect chest X-ray is performed to exclude perforated peptic ulcer as the cause of the pain and raised amylase. Abdominal US is performed as a screening test to look for gallstones as a cause of pancreatitis and may show swelling of the inflamed pancreas. Contrast-enhanced spiral CT scanning or MRI is performed in all but the mildest attack of pancreatitis to confirm the diagnosis, identify the presence and



**Table 4.14** Glasgow criteria for severity. Three or more factors present during the first 48 hours predict a severe episode and a poor prognosis

|                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Age                           | >55 years                |
| White blood cell count        | >15 × 10 <sup>9</sup> /L |
| Blood glucose                 | >10 mmol/L               |
| Serum urea                    | >16 mmol/L               |
| Serum albumin                 | <30 g/L                  |
| Serum aminotransferase        | >200 U/L                 |
| Serum calcium                 | <2 mmol/L                |
| Lactate dehydrogenase         | <600 U/L                 |
| P <sub>a</sub> O <sub>2</sub> | <8.0 KPa (60 mmHg)       |

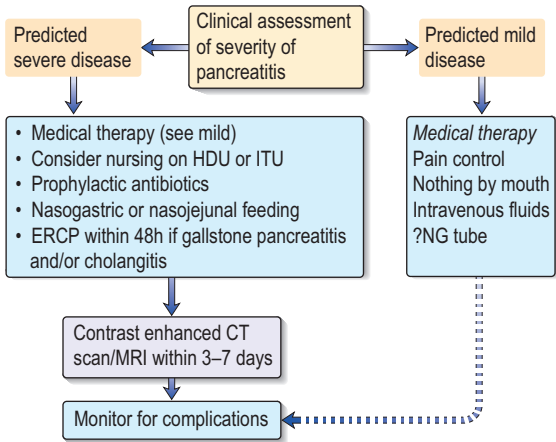
extent of pancreatic necrosis (associated with organ failure and higher mortality) and identify peripancreatic fluid collections. It is performed after 72 days as early CT may underestimate the severity of pancreatitis.

## Management

The management of acute pancreatitis is summarized in Fig. 4.9. Assessment of severity is essential; those predicted to have severe pancreatitis with a protracted course can then be managed in a high-dependency or intensive care unit with vigorous fluid resuscitation, correction of metabolic abnormalities and administration of therapies to improve outcome. Most attacks of pancreatitis are mild with none or only minimal pancreatic necrosis and without systemic complications; these patients usually recover within 5–7 days and need general supportive care only. In contrast, severe pancreatitis is associated with failure of one or more organ systems, such as renal or respiratory failure, and impaired coagulation with disseminated intravascular coagulation. Severe attacks are usually associated with pancreatic necrosis on CT scanning. Several scoring systems are in use to predict those patients with severe pancreatitis: Glasgow criteria (Table 4.14), Ranson's criteria and the acute physiology and chronic health evaluation score, APACHE). Obesity and a C-reactive protein >200 mg/L in the first 4 days are also associated with a worse outcome.

### General supportive care

Early fluid replacement is essential and in severe pancreatitis 5 L or more of crystalloid daily may be required to maintain adequate urine output (>0.5 mL/kg body weight/hour). Supplemental oxygen is given and requirements are guided by pulse oximetry and arterial blood gases. Low molecular weight heparin is given for deep vein thrombosis prophylaxis. Electrolyte and



**Fig. 4.9** The management of acute pancreatitis. HDU, high-dependency unit; ITU, intensive care unit; TPN, total parenteral nutrition; ERCP, endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography; NG, nasogastric.

metabolic abnormalities are corrected and a sliding scale of insulin may be necessary for good control of blood sugar levels. Pain is controlled by pethidine and tramadol and a patient-controlled system of administration is necessary if there is persistent pain. Morphine is avoided because it increases sphincter of Oddi pressure and may aggravate pancreatitis. In patients with a predicted severe episode, there is little likelihood of oral nutrition for a number of weeks. Nutrition is provided via a nasogastric tube or a nasojejunal tube (placed endoscopically) for patients who are intolerant of nasogastric feeding due to exacerbation of pain or nausea and vomiting.

### Therapies to reduce the severity or frequency of complications

Broad-spectrum antibiotics, e.g. cefuroxime or aztreonam, reduce the risk of infection of the necrotic pancreas and are given from the outset. Early ERCP (within 48–72 hours) and sphincterotomy improves the outcome in patients with biliary pancreatitis and evidence of cholangitis or a high suspicion of a CBD stone (dilated CBD or CBD stone seen on US or jaundice) or when pancreatitis is predicted to be severe. Surgical treatment is sometimes required for very severe necrotizing pancreatitis, particularly if it is infected, or if complications such as pancreatic abscesses or pseudocysts occur.

### Complications

Acute complications include hyperglycaemia, hypocalcaemia, renal failure and shock.

## Chronic pancreatitis

Inappropriate activation of enzymes within the pancreas leads to precipitation of protein plugs within the duct lumen, forming a nidus for calcification. Subsequent duct blockage leads to ductal hypertension and further pancreatic damage. This together with cytokine activation leads to pancreatic inflammation, irreversible morphological change and/or permanent impairment of function. The commonest cause of chronic pancreatitis in most developed countries is excess alcohol. Other causes are tropical chronic pancreatitis, and hereditary, autoimmune and cystic fibrosis.

### Clinical features

Epigastric abdominal pain, either intermittent or constant, and radiating through to the back is the commonest symptom. There may be severe weight loss as a result of anorexia. Diabetes and steatorrhoea may develop due to endocrine (insulin) and exocrine (lipase) insufficiency. Occasionally jaundice is the presenting symptom due to obstruction of the CBD during its course through the fibrosed head of pancreas. The differential diagnosis is from pancreatic carcinoma, which also presents with pain and weight loss and may develop on a background of chronic pancreatitis. Carcinoma should be considered when there is a short history and localized ductular abnormalities on imaging.

### Investigations

The diagnosis of chronic pancreatitis is made by imaging (to demonstrate structural changes in the gland), and metabolic studies, which demonstrate functional abnormalities.

- *Radiology.* A plain abdominal X-ray will show pancreatic calcification in some cases. US and CT scanning may show calcifications, ductal dilatation, irregular consistency and outline of the gland, and fluid collections. CT is a more sensitive test than US. MRCP and endoscopic US are sometimes used if the diagnosis is not confirmed with other imaging tests. ERCP is usually reserved for therapeutic e.g. pancreatic stent placement, rather than diagnostic purposes.
- *Functional assessment.* These tests are insensitive in early pancreatic insufficiency. Faecal elastase, measured on a single random stool sample, is reduced. Other tests rely on measuring decreased concentrations of the products of synthetic compounds, e.g. fluorescein dilaurate (pancreolauryl) or *N*-benzoyl-L-tryosyl-*p*-amino benzoic acid (NBT-PABA), which appear in the urine after oral administration and intraluminal hydrolysis by pancreatic esterases and gut absorption. Serum amylase is not of use in the diagnosis of chronic pancreatitis, but may be raised during an acute episode of pain. A raised blood sugar indicates diabetes mellitus.

## Treatment

The patient should be advised to stop drinking alcohol. The pain may require opiates for control, with the attendant risk of addiction. Surgical resection combined with drainage of the pancreatic duct into the small bowel (pancreaticojejunostomy) is of value for severe disease with intractable pain. Pancreatic strictures or stones are sometimes amenable to endoscopic treatment with ERCP. Persistent pseudocysts are drained endoscopically into the stomach or by surgical drainage. Pancreatic enzyme supplements are useful for those with steatorrhoea and may reduce the frequency of attacks of pain in those with recurrent symptoms. Diabetes requires appropriate treatment with diet, oral hypoglycaemics or insulin.

## CARCINOMA OF THE PANCREAS

### Epidemiology

Pancreatic cancer is the fifth most common cause of cancer death in the Western world. Men are affected more commonly than women, and the incidence increases with age, with most cases occurring in patients over 60 years. Most are adenocarcinomas of ductal origin.

### Aetiology

Hereditary (a dominant susceptibility gene in some families and other susceptibility genes in defined syndromes) and environmental factors (smoking and obesity particularly) both contribute. Chronic pancreatitis is also pre-malignant, particularly in patients with hereditary pancreatitis.

### Clinical features

*Cancer affecting the head of the pancreas or ampulla of Vater* presents with painless jaundice as a result of obstruction of the common duct, and weight loss. On examination there is jaundice with characteristic scratch marks and a distended palpable gall bladder (Courvoisier's law: if in a case of painless jaundice the gall bladder is palpable, the cause will not be gallstones). In gallstone disease chronic inflammation and fibrosis prevent distension of the gall bladder. There may be a central abdominal mass.

*Cancer of the body or tail* presents with abdominal pain, weight loss and anorexia.

Diabetes may occur and there is an increased risk of thrombophlebitis.

However, patients may also present with non-specific symptoms, e.g. an elderly patient with dyspepsia and a change in bowel habit.

### Investigations

Diagnosis is made by US (which demonstrates dilated bile ducts and a mass lesion) and/or contrast-enhanced spiral CT; the latter is a more sensitive test

particularly for body and tail tumours and is almost always necessary to stage the cancer. MRI and endoscopic US is used for staging (endoscopic US) and in difficult cases for diagnosis. ERCP is usually restricted to palliative treatment (e.g. bile duct stenting in a jaundiced patient) but may provide a source for cytology in making the diagnosis. The tumour marker, CA19-9 (p. 292), is sensitive but not specific for diagnosis. Serial measurements are more frequently used to monitor response to treatment.

## Management

Optimal management is by a multidisciplinary team approach and with advanced disease involvement of the palliative care team particularly to help with management of pain. Surgical resection offers the only hope of cure but few patients have resectable disease at diagnosis. Tumour adherence or invasion into adjacent structures, particularly major blood vessels (locally advanced disease), makes complete resection difficult, and these patients are treated with combined chemotherapy and radiotherapy. 5-Fluorouracil and gemcitabine improve survival in advanced disease and also increase survival as an adjuvant therapy to pancreatic resection. Palliative treatment is often necessary for patients with unresectable pancreatic cancer to relieve obstructive jaundice (usually by endoscopic placement of a stent across the obstructed distal CBD), gastric outflow obstruction, and pain.

**Table 4.15** Clinical syndromes resulting from neuroendocrine tumours

| Tumour                                  | Secreted hormone                  | Symptoms  | Symptom control                  |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Gastrinoma (Zollinger–Ellison syndrome) | Gastrin                           | Duodenal ulceration – recurrent and severe<br>Diarrhoea – hypersecretion of gastric acid inhibits digestive enzymes | High dose proton pump inhibitors |
| VIPoma                                  | Vasoactive intestinal polypeptide | Severe watery diarrhoea and hypokalaemia due to stimulation of intestinal water and electrolyte secretion           | Octreotide                       |
| Glucagonoma                             | Glucagon                          | Migratory necrolytic dermatitis, weight loss, diabetes mellitus, deep venous thrombosis                             | Octreotide                       |
| Somatostatinoma                         | Somatostatin                      | Diabetes mellitus, gallstones, diarrhoea/steatorrhoea   | Octreotide                       |

## Prognosis

Overall, the prognosis is very poor. For the few patients who have had surgical resection with curative intent the 3-year survival is 30–40%. The median survival for treated patients with locally advanced disease is 8–12 months and for patients with metastatic disease it is 3–6 months.

## Cancer of the Bile Ducts

Like pancreatic cancer, cholangiocarcinoma is also a disease of the elderly with a poor prognosis. It occurs more frequently in patients with primary sclerosing cholangitis, congenital bile duct abnormality and infections with liver flukes e.g. *Clonorchis sinensis*. Presentation is usually with jaundice secondary to bile duct obstruction or with metastatic disease. Imaging by US, CT or MRI shows a bile duct stricture, a hilar mass or multiple metastases.

## NEUROENDOCRINE TUMOURS OF THE PANCREAS

Islet cell tumours are rare and usually produce their clinical effect by hormone production (Table 4.15). Non-functioning tumours present with pain and weight loss. Circulating hormone concentrations, e.g. gastrin, can be measured in the serum and high levels help to make the diagnosis. Most neuroendocrine tumours express large numbers of somatostatin receptors and radiolabelled somatostatin analogue scanning ( $^{111}\text{In}$ -labelled octreotide) provides a means of tumour localization. Endoscopic US is also used for tumour localization. Treatment is by excision of the primary tumour if possible. Symptomatic treatment (e.g. high-dose proton pump inhibitors for gastrinomas) and chemotherapy or hepatic artery embolization are used for patients with hepatic metastases.

# Haematological disease

Blood consists of red cells, white cells, platelets and plasma. Plasma is the liquid component of blood which contains soluble fibrinogen, and in which the other components are suspended. Serum is what remains after the formation of the fibrin clot.

Haemopoiesis is the formation of blood cells. The bone marrow is the only source of blood cells during normal childhood and adult life. Pluripotential stem cells give rise to:

- Lymphoid stem cells, which give rise to pre-T cells (and then T suppressor, T helper and natural killer cells) and pre-B cells (and then B cells and plasma cells).
- Mixed myeloid progenitor cells (CFU<sub>GEMM</sub>), which give rise to colony-forming units committed to the production of red cells, platelets, monocytes, neutrophils, eosinophils and basophils. Production is stimulated by growth factors such as erythropoietin (red cells), thrombopoietin (platelets), neutrophils (granulocyte colony stimulating factor, G-CSF) and interleukin-5 (eosinophils). Other factors such as tumour necrosis factor (TNF) are inhibitory.

Reticulocytes are young red cells recently released from the bone marrow and still contain RNA. They are larger than mature red cells and normally represent 0.5–2.5% of total circulating red blood cells. The reticulocyte count gives a guide to the erythroid activity in the bone marrow and there is normally an increase with haemorrhage, haemolysis and after treatment with specific haematinics in deficiency states.

## ANAEMIA

The principal physiological function of haemoglobin (Hb) is to carry and deliver oxygen to the tissues from the lungs. Hb is a tetramer consisting of two pairs of globin polypeptide chains: one pair of alpha chains and one pair of non-alpha chains. A haem group, consisting of a single molecule of protoporphyrin IX bound to a single ferrous ion ( $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ ) is linked covalently at a

specific site to each globin chain. Oxygenation and deoxygenation of haemoglobin occur at the haem iron.

Anaemia is present when there is a decrease in the level of Hb in the blood below the reference range for the age and sex of the individual. Reduction of Hb is usually accompanied by a fall in red cell count (RCC) and packed cell volume (PCV, haematocrit), although an increase in plasma volume (as with massive splenomegaly) may cause anaemia with a normal RCC and PCV ('dilutional anaemia'). The normal values for these indices are given in Table 5.1, all of which are measured using automated cell counters as part of a routine full blood count (FBC).

## Clinical features

Symptoms depend on the severity and speed of onset of anaemia. A very slowly falling level of Hb allows for haemodynamic compensation and enhancement of the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood, and thus patients with anaemia may be asymptomatic. In general, elderly people tolerate anaemia less well than young people. The symptoms are non-specific and include fatigue, faintness and breathlessness. Angina pectoris and intermittent claudication may occur in those with coexistent atheromatous arterial disease. On examination the skin and mucous membranes are pale; there

**Table 5.1** Normal values for adult peripheral blood

|                        | Male      | Female                              |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Hb (g/dL)              | 13.5–17.5 | 11.5–16                             |
| PCV (haematocrit, L/L) | 0.4–0.54  | 0.37–0.47                           |
| RCC ( $10^{12}/L$ )    | 4.5–6.0   | 3.9–5.0                             |
| MCV (fL)               |           | 80–96                               |
| MCH (pg)               |           | 27–32                               |
| MCHC (g/dL)            |           | 32–36                               |
| RDW (%)                |           | 11–15                               |
| WCC ( $10^9/L$ )       |           | 4.0–11.0                            |
| Platelets ( $10^9/L$ ) |           | 150–400                             |
| ESR (mm/h)             |           | <20                                 |
| Reticulocytes          |           | 0.5–2.5% ( $50–100 \times 10^9/L$ ) |

*ESR, erythrocyte sedimentation rate; Hb, haemoglobin; MCH, mean corpuscular haemoglobin; MCHC, mean corpuscular haemoglobin concentration; MCV, mean corpuscular volume of red cells; PCV, packed cell volume; RCC, red cell count; RDW, red blood cell distribution width (an increase indicates greater variation in red cell size with both large and small red cells); WCC, white cell count.*



**Table 5.2** Classification of the anaemias based on the mean corpuscular volume (MCV)

| Small cells<br>(microcytes)<br>Low MCV (< 80 fL) | Normal-sized cells<br>Normal MCV          | Large cells<br>(macrocytes)<br>High MCV (> 96 fL) |
|--|---|---|
| Iron deficiency                                  | Acute blood loss                          | Megaloblastic                                     |
| Anaemia of chronic disease                       | Anaemia of chronic disease                | Vitamin B <sub>12</sub> deficiency                |
| Thalassaemia                                     | Combined deficiency, e.g. iron and folate | Folate deficiency                                 |
| Sideroblastic anaemia                            | Marrow infiltration/fibrosis              | Normoblastic                                      |
|  | Endocrine disease                         | Alcohol   |
|  | Haemolytic anaemias                       | ↑ Reticulocytes, e.g. haemorrhage, haemolysis     |
|  |   | Liver disease                                     |
|  |   | Hypothyroidism                                    |
|  |   | Drug therapy e.g. azathioprine                    |

may be a tachycardia and a systolic flow murmur. Cardiac failure may occur in elderly people or those with compromised cardiac function.

## Classification of anaemia (Table 5.2)

The causes of anaemia are classified according to the measurement of red blood cell size. Automatic cell counters provide a value for the mean of the red blood cell volume based on counting millions of cells (the mean corpuscular volume, MCV). This classification is useful because the type of anaemia then indicates the underlying causes and necessary investigations. Irrespective of the cause, most patients with chronic anaemia do not require blood transfusion and the appropriate management, unless severely anaemic, is treatment of the underlying cause.

### Microcytic anaemia

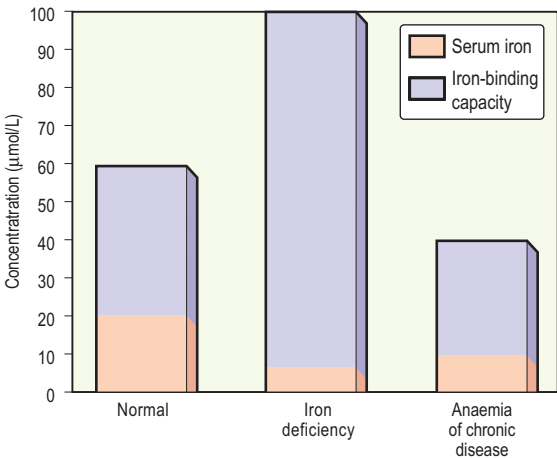
Microcytosis usually reflects a decreased Hb content within the red blood cell and is then often associated with a reduction in the mean corpuscular haemoglobin (MCH) and mean corpuscular haemoglobin concentration (MCHC), producing a hypochromic appearance on the blood film. The causes of microcytic anaemia are listed in Table 5.2:  $\alpha$ - or  $\beta$ -thalassaemia minor (p. 208) is associated with a microcytosis usually in the absence of anaemia.

## Iron deficiency

Iron is necessary for the formation of haem and iron deficiency is the most common cause of anaemia world-wide. The average daily diet in the UK contains 15–20 mg of iron although normally only 10% of this is absorbed, mainly in the duodenum. Body iron content is regulated by alteration in intestinal iron absorption. Factors that promote intestinal absorption include gastric acid, iron deficiency and increased erythropoietic activity. Elimination of iron is fixed at 1 mg/day and occurs through loss in sloughed skin and mucosal cells through sweat, urine and faeces. In women there is an additional loss during menses, and pre-menopausal women may often border on iron deficiency. There are two forms of dietary iron:

- Non-haem iron forms the main part of dietary iron and is derived from fortified cereals and vegetables. It is dissolved in the low pH of the stomach and reduced from the ferric to the ferrous form by a brush border ferrereductase before transportation across the mucosal cells.
- Haem iron is derived from haemoglobin and myoglobin in red or organ meats. Haem iron is better absorbed than non-haem iron.

Iron is transported in the plasma bound to the protein transferrin, which is synthesized in the liver and normally about one-third saturated with iron (Fig. 5.1). Most of the body's iron content is incorporated into haemoglobin in developing erythroid precursors and mature red cells. Most of the remaining



**Fig. 5.1** Serum iron and total iron-binding capacity (transferrin) in normal subjects, iron deficiency anaemia and anaemia of chronic disease.

body iron is stored as ferritin and haemosiderin in hepatocytes, skeletal muscle and reticuloendothelial macrophages.

### Causes of iron deficiency

- Causes of iron deficiency are:
- Blood loss
- Increased demands such as growth and pregnancy
- Decreased absorption, e.g. small bowel disease or post-gastrectomy
- Poor intake; this is rare in developed countries.

Most iron deficiency is due to blood loss, usually from the uterus or gastrointestinal tract. On a world-wide basis hookworm is a common cause of intestinal blood loss and iron deficiency. In women of childbearing age, menstrual blood loss, pregnancy and breast-feeding contribute to iron deficiency.

### Clinical features

Symptoms and signs are the result of anaemia (p. 194) and of decreased epithelial cell iron, which causes brittle hair and nails, atrophic glossitis and angular stomatitis.

### Investigations

- Blood count and film. The red cells are microcytic (MCV <80 fL) and hypochromic (mean corpuscular haemoglobin <27 pg). There is anisocytosis (variation in size) and poikilocytosis (variation in shape).
- Serum ferritin reflects iron stores and is low. However, ferritin is an acute-phase reactant and in the presence of inflammatory or malignant disease levels may be within the normal range in the presence of iron deficiency.
- Serum iron is low and the total iron-binding capacity (TIBC) is high, resulting in a transferrin saturation (serum iron divided by TIBC) <19% (Fig. 5.1).
- Serum soluble transferrin receptor number increases in iron deficiency.
- Bone marrow examination is only necessary in complicated cases, and shows erythroid hyperplasia and absence of iron.

Iron deficiency is almost always the result of chronic, often occult, gastrointestinal blood loss in men and in post-menopausal women, and further investigation of the gastrointestinal tract is required to determine the cause of the blood loss (see p. 91). Iron deficiency anaemia in pre-menopausal women is usually the result of menstrual blood loss. In this group the only investigation necessary is serology for coeliac disease, and endoscopic investigation only if there are intestinal symptoms or a family history of colorectal cancer (two first-degree relatives or one <45 years of age).

## Differential diagnosis

This is from other causes of a microcytic/hypochromic anaemia (see Table 5.2).

## Management

- Find and treat the underlying cause.
- Oral iron, e.g. ferrous sulphate or ferrous gluconate (p. 240). A response to iron treatment is characterized by an increase in the reticulocyte count followed by an increase in Hb at a rate of about 1 g/dL every week until the Hb concentration is normal.
- Parenteral iron (deep intramuscular or intravenous infusion) is rarely necessary and used only when patients are intolerant or there is a poor response to oral iron, e.g. severe malabsorption.

## Anaemia of chronic disease

This occurs in patients with chronic inflammatory diseases such as Crohn's disease and rheumatoid arthritis, chronic infections such as tuberculosis, malignancy and chronic kidney disease. There is a normochromic, normocytic or microcytic anaemia. Characteristic laboratory findings include low serum iron levels, low serum iron-binding capacity (Fig. 5.1) and increased or normal serum ferritin. The exact mechanisms responsible for these effects are not clear and include decreased release of iron from bone marrow to developing erythroblasts, inadequate erythropoietin response to the anaemia and high levels of hepcidin expression. Hepcidin is synthesized in the liver and binds to the export transport protein, ferroportin, in the basolateral surface of the iron absorbing cells in the duodenum, thereby causing its internalization and degradation. Treatment of anaemia of chronic disease is that of the underlying cause and sometimes recombinant erythropoietin (p. 394).

## Sideroblastic anaemia

Sideroblastic anaemia is a rare disorder of haem synthesis characterized by a refractory anaemia with hypochromic cells in the peripheral blood and ring sideroblasts in the bone marrow. Ring sideroblasts are erythroblasts with iron deposited in mitochondria and reflect impaired utilization of iron delivered to the developing erythroblast. It may be inherited or acquired (secondary to myelodysplasia, alcohol excess, lead toxicity, isoniazid). Treatment is to withdraw the causative agents and some cases respond to pyridoxine (vitamin B<sub>6</sub>).

## Macrocytic anaemia

Macrocytosis is a rise in mean cell volume of the red cells above the normal range. Macrocytic anaemia can be divided into megaloblastic and

non-megaloblastic types, depending on the bone marrow findings. In practice, macrocytosis is usually investigated without performing a bone marrow examination. The initial investigation is measurement of serum B<sub>12</sub> and red cell folate.

## Megaloblastic anaemia

Megaloblastic anaemia is characterized by the presence in the bone marrow of developing red blood cells with delayed nuclear maturation relative to that of the cytoplasm (*megaloblasts*). The underlying mechanism is defective DNA synthesis, which may also affect the white cells (causing hypersegmented neutrophil nuclei with six lobes, and sometimes leucopenia) and platelets (causing thrombocytopenia). The most common cause of megaloblastic anaemia is deficiency of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> or folate, both of which are necessary for the synthesis of DNA (Table 5.2).

## Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency

Animal products (meat and dairy products) provide the only dietary source of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> for humans. The daily requirement is 1 µg, which is easily supplied by a balanced Western diet (containing 5–30 µg daily). Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is liberated from protein complexes in food by gastric acid and pepsin and binds to a vitamin B<sub>12</sub>-binding protein ('R' binder) derived from saliva. Free B<sub>12</sub> is then released by pancreatic enzymes and becomes bound to intrinsic factor, which, along with H<sup>+</sup> ions, is secreted from gastric parietal cells. This complex is delivered to the terminal ileum, where vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is absorbed and transported to the tissues by the carrier protein transcobalamin II. Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is stored in the liver, where there is sufficient supply for 2 or more years. About 1% of an oral dose of B<sub>12</sub> is absorbed 'passively' without the need for intrinsic factor, mainly through the duodenum and ileum. The causes of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency are listed in Table 5.3.

## Pernicious anaemia

Pernicious anaemia is an autoimmune condition in which there is atrophic gastritis (plasma and lymphoid cell infiltration in the fundus) with loss of parietal cells and hence failure of intrinsic factor production and vitamin B<sub>12</sub> malabsorption. There is also achlorhydria. It is the most common cause of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency in adults in Western countries.

## Epidemiology

This disease is common in elderly people and many cases are undiagnosed. It is more common in women and in people with fair hair and blue eyes. There is an association with other autoimmune diseases, particularly thyroid disease, Addison's disease and vitiligo.

**Table 5.3** Vitamin B12 deficiency – causes

|  |
|--|
| <b>Low dietary intake</b>                        |
| Vegans   |
| <b>Impaired absorption</b>                       |
| Stomach  |
| Pernicious anaemia                               |
| Gastrectomy                                      |
| Congenital deficiency of intrinsic factor        |
| Small bowel                                      |
| Ileal disease or resection, e.g. Crohn's disease |
| Coeliac disease                                  |
| Tropical sprue                                   |
| Bacterial overgrowth                             |
| Fish tapeworm ( <i>Diphyllobothrium latum</i> )  |
| <b>Abnormal utilization</b>                      |
| Congenital transcobalamin II deficiency (rare)   |
| Nitrous oxide (inactivates B <sub>12</sub> )     |

## Clinical features

The onset of pernicious anaemia is insidious, with progressively increasing symptoms of anaemia. There may be glossitis (a red sore tongue), angular stomatitis and mild jaundice caused by excess breakdown of haemoglobin. Neurological features can occur with very low levels of serum B<sub>12</sub> and include a polyneuropathy caused by symmetrical damage to the peripheral nerves and posterior and lateral columns of the spinal cord (subacute combined degeneration of the cord). The latter presents with progressive weakness, ataxia and eventually paraplegia if untreated. Dementia and visual disturbances due to optic atrophy may also occur. There is a higher incidence of gastric carcinoma with pernicious anaemia than in the general population.

## Investigation of B<sub>12</sub> deficiency

- Blood count and film. There is a macrocytic anaemia (MCV often >110 fL) with hypersegmented neutrophil nuclei and, in severe cases, leucopenia and thrombocytopenia.
- Serum vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is low, frequently <50 ng/L (normal >160 ng/L).
- Red cell folate may be reduced because vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is necessary to convert serum folate to the active intracellular form.
- Serum autoantibodies. Parietal cell antibodies (not specific) are present in 90% and intrinsic factor antibodies (specific to the diagnosis) in 50% of patients with pernicious anaemia.

- Serum bilirubin may be raised as a result of excess breakdown of haemoglobin, owing to ineffective erythropoiesis in the bone marrow.
- In most cases, the cause is apparent from the history and autoantibody screen. A small bowel barium follow-through (to look at the terminal ileum) and distal duodenal biopsies (to look for coeliac disease) may be necessary in some patients.
- Bone marrow examination shows a hypercellular bone marrow with megaloblastic changes. This is not necessary in straightforward cases.

## Differential diagnosis

Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency must be differentiated from other causes of megaloblastic anaemia, principally folate deficiency, but this is usually clear from the blood levels of these two vitamins. Pernicious anaemia should be distinguished from other causes of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency (Table 5.3).

## Management

Treatment is with intramuscular hydroxocobalamin (vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, p. 241) or oral B<sub>12</sub> 2 mg per day.

## Folate deficiency

Folate is found in green vegetables and offal such as liver and kidney. It is absorbed in the upper small intestine. The daily requirement for folate is 100–200 µg and a normal mixed diet contains 200–300 µg. Body stores are sufficient for about 4 months, but folate deficiency may develop much more rapidly in patients who have a poor intake and excess utilization of folate, for example patients in intensive care. The main cause of folate deficiency is poor intake, which may occur alone or in combination with excessive utilization or malabsorption (Table 5.4).

## Clinical features

Symptoms and signs are the result of anaemia.

**Table 5.4** Causes of folate deficiency

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Poor intake</b>        | Old age, poverty, alcohol excess (also impaired utilization), anorexia  |
| <b>Malabsorption</b>      | Coeliac disease, Crohn's disease, tropical sprue  |
| <b>Excess utilization</b> | Physiological: pregnancy, lactation, prematurity<br>Pathological: chronic haemolytic anaemia, malignant and inflammatory diseases, renal dialysis |
| <b>Drugs</b>              | Phenytoin, trimethoprim, sulfasalazine, methotrexate  |

## Investigations

Red cell folate is low (normal range 160–640  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ) and is a more accurate guide to tissue folate than serum folate, which is also usually low (normal range 4.0–18  $\mu\text{g}/\text{L}$ ). If the history does not suggest dietary deficiency as the cause, further investigations such as endoscopic small bowel biopsy should be performed to look for small bowel disease.

## Management

The underlying cause must be treated and folate deficiency corrected by giving oral folic acid 5 mg daily for 4 months; higher daily doses may be necessary with malabsorption. In megaloblastic anaemia of undetermined cause, folic acid alone must not be given, as this will aggravate the neuropathy of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency. Prophylactic folic acid is given to patients with chronic haemolysis (5 mg weekly) and pregnant women.

**Prevention of neural tube defects with folic acid** To prevent first occurrence of neural tube defects, women who are planning a pregnancy should be advised to take folate supplements (at least 400  $\mu\text{g}/\text{day}$ ) before conception and during pregnancy. Larger doses (5 mg daily) are recommended for mothers who already have an infant with a neural tube defect.

## Differential diagnosis

A raised MCV with macrocytosis on the peripheral blood film can occur with a normoblastic rather than a megaloblastic bone marrow (Table 5.5). The

**Table 5.5** Causes of macrocytosis other than megaloblastic anaemia

| Physiological                  |
|--------------------------------|
| Pregnancy                      |
| Newborn                        |
| Pathological                   |
| Alcohol excess                 |
| Liver disease                  |
| Reticulocytosis                |
| Hypothyroidism                 |
| Haematological disorders:      |
| Myelodysplastic syndrome       |
| Sideroblastic anaemia          |
| Aplastic anaemia               |
| Drugs:                         |
| Hydroxycarbamide (hydroxyurea) |
| Azathioprine                   |
| Cold agglutinins               |



most common cause of macrocytosis in the UK is alcohol excess. The exact mechanism for the large red cells in each of these conditions is uncertain, but in some it is thought to be due to altered or excessive lipid deposition on red cell membranes.

## Anaemia caused by marrow failure (aplastic anaemia)

Aplastic anaemia is defined as *pancytopenia* (deficiency of all cell elements of the blood) with *hypocellularity* (aplasia) of the bone marrow. It is an uncommon but serious condition which may be inherited but is more commonly acquired. There is a reduction in the number of pluripotential stem cells together with a fault in those remaining or an immune reaction against them so that they are unable to repopulate the bone marrow. Failure of only one cell line may also occur, resulting in isolated deficiencies, e.g. red cell aplasia.

### Aetiology

Aplastic anaemia can be induced by a variety of disorders (Table 5.6). Many drugs have been associated with the development of aplastic anaemia, and this occurs as a predictable dose-related effect (e.g. chemotherapeutic agents) or as an idiosyncratic reaction (e.g. chloramphenicol, phenytoin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents).

### Clinical features

Symptoms are the result of the deficiency of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets, and include anaemia, increased susceptibility to infection and bleeding. Physical findings include bruising, bleeding gums and epistaxis. Mouth infections are common.

**Table 5.6** Causes of aplastic anaemia

|   |
|---|
| Congenital, e.g. Fanconi's anaemia            |
| Idiopathic acquired (67% of cases)            |
| Cytotoxic drugs and radiation                 |
| Idiosyncratic drug reaction, e.g. phenytoin   |
| Chemicals: benzene, insecticides              |
| Infections, e.g. HIV, hepatitis, tuberculosis |
| Paroxysmal nocturnal haemoglobinuria          |
| Miscellaneous, e.g. pregnancy                 |

*HIV, human immunodeficiency virus.*

## Investigations

- Blood count shows pancytopenia with low or absent reticulocytes.
- Bone marrow examination shows a hypocellular marrow with increased fat spaces.

## Differential diagnosis

This is from other causes of pancytopenia (Table 5.7). A bone marrow trephine biopsy is essential for assessment of the bone marrow cellularity.

## Management

Treatment includes withdrawal of the offending agent, supportive care and some form of definitive therapy (see below). Blood and platelet transfusions are used cautiously in patients who are candidates for bone marrow transplantation (BMT) to avoid sensitization. Patients with severe neutropenia (absolute neutrophil count  $<500$  cells/ $\mu\text{L}$ ) are at risk of serious infections with bacteria, fungi (e.g. *Candida* and aspergillosis) and viruses (herpesvirus). Fever in a neutropenic patient is a medical emergency (Emergency Box 5.1).

The course of aplastic anaemia is very variable, ranging from a rapid spontaneous remission to a persistent, increasingly severe pancytopenia, which may lead to death through haemorrhage or infection. Features that indicate a poor prognosis are neutrophil count  $<0.5 \times 10^9/\text{L}$ , platelet count  $<20 \times 10^9/\text{L}$  and a reticulocyte count of  $<40 \times 10^9/\text{L}$ .

In those patients who do not undergo spontaneous recovery the options for treatment are as follows:

- BMT from a human leucocyte antigen (HLA)-identical sibling donor is the treatment of choice for patients under 40 years of age.
- Immunosuppressive therapy with antilymphocyte globulin and ciclosporin is used for patients over the age of 40 years in whom BMT is not indicated because of the high risk of graft-versus-host disease.

**Table 5.7** Causes of pancytopenia

|   |
|---|
| Aplastic anaemia (see Table 5.6)  |
| Drugs   |
| Megaloblastic anaemia   |
| Bone marrow infiltration or replacement: lymphoma, acute leukaemia, myeloma, secondary carcinoma, myelofibrosis |
| Hypersplenism   |
| Systemic lupus erythematosus  |
| Disseminated tuberculosis   |
| Paroxysmal nocturnal haemoglobinuria  |
| Overwhelming sepsis   |



## Emergency Box 5.1

### Assessment and treatment of suspected neutropenic sepsis

Suspect neutropenic sepsis in a neutropenic patient (neutrophil count  $<1 \times 10^9/L$ ) who is pyrexial or has new-onset confusion, tachycardia, hypotension, dyspnoea or hypothermia.

#### Assessment

- History and physical examination including mucous membranes, oropharynx (?thrush, erythema), surgical sites and intravenous lines

#### Investigations

- Bloods: Full blood count and differential white cell count, C-reactive protein, urea and electrolytes, liver biochemistry, clotting, blood cultures
- Radiology: Chest X-ray. Consider further imaging if localizing signs, e.g. computed tomography (CT) scan of abdomen and pelvis
- Microbiology: Microscopy and culture of peripheral blood (as above) and taken from central lines, sputum, urine, stool (if diarrhoea)

#### Antibiotics

- Seek expert help from microbiologist and oncologist
- Start empirical intravenous antibiotic treatment, e.g. piperacillin and aminoglycoside, to cover Gram-negative organisms and *Pseudomonas*
- Add vancomycin if clinical deterioration, fever persists or suspected meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infection
- Subsequent treatment is adjusted on the basis of cultured organisms and clinical progress
- Swap to oral antibiotics when afebrile for 48 hours and continue for 10–14 days

## HAEMOLYTIC ANAEMIA

Haemolytic anaemia results from increased destruction of red cells with a reduction of the circulating lifespan (normally 120 days). There is a compensatory increase in bone marrow activity with premature release of immature red cells (reticulocytes, p. 193).

Red cell destruction may be extravascular (within the reticuloendothelial system) or intravascular (within the blood vessels). In most haemolytic conditions, red cell destruction is extravascular, and cells are removed from the circulation by macrophages in the reticuloendothelial system, particularly the spleen. The causes of haemolytic anaemia in adults are listed in Table 5.8.

When red cells are broken down within the circulation, haemoglobin appears in the plasma as the oxidized form, methaemoglobin, which dissociates into ferrihaem and globin. Binding of ferrihaem to albumin forms

**Table 5.8** Causes of haemolytic anaemia

| Inherited                    | Acquired  |
|------------------------------|---|
| Red cell membrane defect     | Immune  |
| Hereditary spherocytosis     | Autoantibodies                                    |
| Hereditary elliptocytosis    | Alloimmune  |
|                              | Drug-induced antibodies                           |
| Haemoglobin abnormalities    |   |
| Thalassaemia                 | Non-immune  |
| Sickle cell disease          | Paroxysmal nocturnal haemoglobinuria              |
| Metabolic defects            | Mechanical destruction: microangiopathic          |
| G6PD deficiency              | Haemolytic anaemia, damaged artificial            |
| Pyruvate kinase deficiency   | heart valves, march haemoglobinuria               |
| Pyrimidine kinase deficiency | Secondary to systemic disease, e.g. liver failure |
|                              | Infections e.g. malaria                           |
|                              | Drugs/chemicals                                   |
|                              | Hypersplenism                                     |

*G6PD, glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency.*

*methaemalbumin* and this can be detected in the plasma (Schumm's test). Free haemoglobin binds to plasma *haptoglobins*; the haemoglobin-haptoglobin is rapidly removed by the liver, leading to a reduction in plasma haptoglobin. Haemoglobin that is unbound to haptoglobin is filtered by the glomerulus and appears in the urine as *haemoglobinuria*. Some Hb is broken down in the renal tubular cells and appears as *haemosiderin* in the urine. Fig. 5.2 shows an approach to investigating the patient with suspected haemolytic anaemia.

## INHERITED HAEMOLYTIC ANAEMIAS

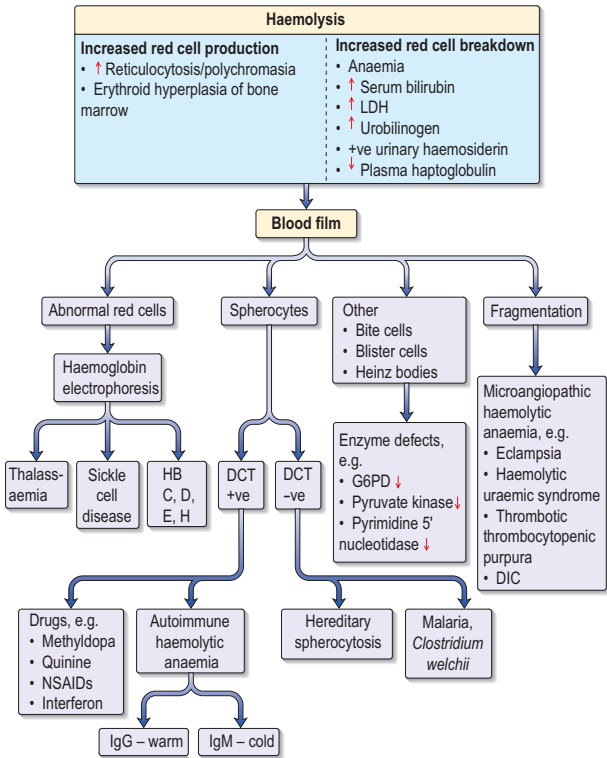
Inherited haemolytic anaemias are due to defects in one or more components of the mature red blood cell:

- Cell membrane
- Haemoglobin
- Metabolic machinery of the red blood cell.

### Membrane defects

#### Hereditary spherocytosis

This is the most common inherited haemolytic anaemia in northern Europeans, and is inherited in an autosomal dominant manner. A defect in the



**Fig. 5.2** An approach to investigation of suspected haemolytic anaemia. LDH, lactate dehydrogenase; G6PD, glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase; DIC, disseminated intravascular coagulation; NSAID, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug; DCT, direct Coombs' test.

red cell membrane causes an increased permeability to sodium, the red cells become spherical in shape, are more rigid and less deformable than normal red cells, and are destroyed prematurely in the spleen. The commonest cause of hereditary spherocytosis is a deficiency of the red cell structural membrane protein *spectrin*.

## Clinical features

The clinical severity varies from symptom-free carrier to severe haemolysis with anaemia, jaundice and splenomegaly. As in many haemolytic anaemias, the course of the disease may be interrupted by aplastic, haemolytic and

megaloblastic crises. Aplastic anaemia usually occurs after infections, particularly with erythro(parvo)virus, whereas megaloblastic anaemia is the result of folate depletion caused by hyperactivity of the bone marrow. Chronic haemolysis may lead to the development of pigment gallstones.

## Investigations

- Blood count demonstrates reticulocytosis and anaemia, which is usually mild.
- The blood film shows spherocytes (also seen in autoimmune haemolytic anaemia) and reticulocytes.

The diagnosis is usually straightforward and made on the basis of clinical features, family history, laboratory investigation (as above) and exclusion of other causes of haemolytic anaemia, particularly autoimmune haemolytic anaemia.

## Management

Splenectomy should be performed in all but the mildest of cases. This is usually postponed until after childhood to minimize the risk of overwhelming infections (p. 222).

## Hereditary elliptocytosis

Hereditary elliptocytosis is similar to spherocytosis but the red cells are elliptical in shape. It is milder clinically and usually does not require splenectomy.

## Haemoglobin abnormalities

Normal adult Hb is made up of haem and two polypeptide globin chains,  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . The haemoglobinopathies can be classified into two subgroups: *abnormal chain production* or *abnormal chain structure* of the polypeptide chains (Table 5.9).

## Thalassaemia

In normal Hb there is balanced (1:1) production of  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  chains. The thalassaemias are a group of disorders arising from one or multiple gene defects, resulting in a reduced rate of production of one or more globin chains. The imbalanced globin chain production leads to precipitation of globin chains within red cells or precursors. This results in cell damage, death of red cell precursors in the bone marrow (ineffective erythropoiesis), and haemolysis. The thalassaemias affect people throughout the world. There are two main types:

- $\alpha$ -Thalassaemia: reduced  $\alpha$  chain synthesis
- $\beta$ -Thalassaemia: reduced  $\beta$  chain synthesis.

**Table 5.9** Types of haemoglobin

|                           | Haemoglobin    | Structure          | Comment  |
|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------|--|
| Normal                    | A              | $\alpha_2\beta_2$  | 97% of adult haemoglobin   |
|                           | A <sub>2</sub> | $\alpha_2\delta_2$ | 2% of adult Hb; elevated in $\beta$ -thalassaemia                            |
|                           | F              | $\alpha_2\gamma_2$ | Normal Hb in fetus from 3rd to 9th month; increased in $\beta$ -thalassaemia |
| Abnormal chain production | H              | $\beta_4$          | Found in $\alpha$ -thalassaemia, biologically useless                        |
|                           | Barts          | $\gamma_4$         | Found in $\alpha$ -thalassaemia, biologically useless                        |
| Abnormal chain structure  | S              | $\alpha_2\beta_2$  | Substitution of valine for glutamic acid in position 6 of $\beta$ chain      |
|                           | C              | $\alpha_2\beta_2$  | Substitution of lysine for glutamic acid in position 6 of $\beta$ chain      |

**$\beta$ -Thalassaemia** In homozygous  $\beta$ -thalassaemia there is little or no  $\beta$  chain production, resulting in excess  $\alpha$  chains. These combine with whatever  $\delta$  and  $\gamma$  chains are produced, leading to increased Hb A<sub>2</sub> and Hb F. There are three main clinical forms of  $\beta$ -thalassaemia:

- *$\beta$ -Thalassaemia minor (trait)*. This is the asymptomatic heterozygous carrier state. Anaemia is mild or absent, with a low MCV and MCH. Iron stores and serum ferritin levels are normal.
- *$\beta$ -Thalassaemia intermedia*. This includes patients with moderate anaemia (Hb 7–10 g/dL) that does not require regular blood transfusions. Splenomegaly, bone deformities, recurrent leg ulcers and gallstones are other features. This may be caused by a combination of homozygous  $\beta$ - and  $\alpha$ -thalassaemias.
- *$\beta$ -Thalassaemia major (homozygous  $\beta$ -thalassaemia)*. This presents in the first year of life with severe anaemia (*Cooley's anaemia*), failure to thrive and recurrent infections. Hypertrophy of the ineffective bone marrow leads to bony abnormalities: the thalassaemic facies, with an enlarged maxilla and prominent frontal and parietal bones. Resumption of haemopoiesis in the spleen and liver (extramedullary haemopoiesis), the chief sites of red cell production in fetal life, leads to hepatosplenomegaly.

## Investigations

In homozygous disease, blood count and film show a hypochromic/microcytic anaemia, raised reticulocyte count and nucleated red cells in the peripheral circulation.

The diagnosis is made by haemoglobin electrophoresis, which shows an increase in Hb F and absent or markedly reduced Hb A.

## Management

In homozygous patients, the mainstay of treatment is blood transfusion, aiming to keep the haemoglobin above 10 g/dL, thus suppressing ineffective erythropoiesis, preventing bony abnormalities and allowing normal development. Iron overload caused by repeated blood transfusions may lead to damage of the endocrine glands, liver, pancreas and heart, with death in the second decade from cardiac failure. Treatment with iron-chelating agents (subcutaneous desferrioxamine, oral deferasirox or deferiprone) decreases iron loading. Ascorbic acid 200 mg daily is also given as it increases the urinary excretion of iron in response to desferrioxamine. BMT has been used in some cases of thalassaemia.

**$\alpha$ -Thalassaemia** The clinical manifestations of this disorder vary from a mild anaemia with microcytosis to a severe condition incompatible with life. There are four  $\alpha$ -globin genes per cell. The manifestations depend on whether one, two, three or all four of the genes are deleted, and thus whether a chain synthesis is partial or completely absent. In the most severe form, where there is complete absence of  $\alpha$ -globin (Hb Barts), infants are stillborn (hydrops fetalis).

## Antenatal diagnosis of haemoglobin abnormalities

A fetus with severe haemoglobin abnormalities can be identified by DNA analysis of chorionic villus samples taken in the first trimester, or by testing umbilical cord blood in the second trimester. Abortion is offered if the fetus is found to be affected. This examination is appropriate if the mother is found to have a haemoglobin defect during antenatal testing and if, on subsequent screening, her partner is also affected.

## Sickle syndromes

Sickle syndromes are a family of haemoglobin disorders in which the sickle  $\beta$ -globin gene is inherited (Table 5.9). The sickle  $\beta$  gene is spread widely throughout Africa (25% carry the gene), India, the Middle East and Mediterranean countries. In the homozygous state (*sickle cell anaemia*) both genes are abnormal (Hb SS), whereas in the heterozygous state (*sickle cell trait*, Hb AS) only one chromosome carries the abnormal gene. Inheritance of the *HbS* gene from one parent and *HbC* from the other parent gives rise to Hb SC



disease, which tends to run a milder clinical course than sickle cell disease but with more thromboses.

In the deoxygenated state Hb S molecules are insoluble and polymerize. This results in increased rigidity of the red cells, causing the classic sickle appearance (Fig. 5.3). Sickling can produce:

- Premature destruction of red cells (haemolysis)
- Obstruction of the microcirculation (vaso-occlusion), leading to tissue infarction.

Sickling is precipitated by hypoxia, dehydration, infection and cold.

## Sickle cell anaemia

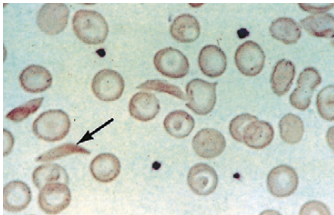
### Clinical features

As the production of Hb F is normal, the disease is usually not manifest until Hb F decreases to adult levels at about 6 months of age. There is extreme phenotypic variation with some patients having few or no symptoms and others having recurrent crises and a markedly reduced life expectancy.

**Vaso-occlusion** In early childhood acute pain in the hands and feet (dactylitis) is due to occlusion of the small vessels and avascular necrosis of bone marrow. In adults, bone pain most commonly affects the long bones, ribs, spine and pelvis. The frequency of attacks varies from daily to perhaps once a year.

**Anaemia** Most patients have a steady-state Hb of 6–8 g/dL with a high reticulocyte count (10–20%). They often do not have symptoms of anaemia because Hb S releases oxygen to the tissues more easily than normal Hb. A rapid fall in the Hb can occur due to:

- Splenic sequestration. The spleen becomes engorged with red cells, leading to an acute fall in Hb and rapid enlargement of the spleen. Liver sequestration can also occur.
- Bone marrow aplasia most commonly due to erythrovirus B19 infection, which destroys erythrocyte precursors
- Further haemolysis due to drugs or acute infection.



**Fig. 5.3** Sickle cells (arrowed) and target cells ('Mexican hat cells').

**Long-term problems** Avascular necrosis of bones results in shortened, deformed bones in children. Other complications of vaso-occlusion include splenic atrophy (resulting in susceptibility to infection with pneumococcus, *Salmonella* species and *Haemophilus*), retinal ischaemia (which may precipitate proliferative sickle retinopathy and visual loss) and cerebral infarction (causing fits and strokes). Transcranial Doppler ultrasound measures mean velocity of blood flow in the large intracranial vessels and is used to screen for patients at high risk of stroke and offer them prophylactic transfusion. Sequestration of red cells within the corpora cavernosa causes priapism (prolonged painful erections) and eventual impotence. Chronic haemolysis is associated with increased formation of pigment gallstones. Other complications of sickle cell disease include chronic kidney disease, leg ulcers, osteomyelitis, pulmonary hypertension and the acute chest syndrome. The latter is a medical emergency and characterized by fever, cough, dyspnoea and pulmonary infiltrates on the chest X-ray. It is caused by infection, fat embolism from necrotic bone marrow or pulmonary infarction due to sequestration of sickle cells.

## Investigations

Sickle cell disease is diagnosed by screening in the neonate (using cord blood or the heel prick test), in the fetus of at-risk couples through prenatal diagnosis, and in children and adults from high-risk areas before undergoing surgery. In Africa many patients are still diagnosed only when they present with complications.

- Blood count. Hb (6–8 g/dL) is low with a high reticulocyte count.
- Blood film shows sickled erythrocytes (Fig. 5.3).

Diagnosis is made with Hb electrophoresis showing 80–95% Hb SS and absent Hb A. In addition, sickling can be induced in vitro with sodium dithionite.

## Management

Precipitating factors should be avoided or treated promptly. Transfusions are not routinely given in steady state anaemia. Folic acid is given to all patients with haemolysis. Pneumococcal and influenza vaccination is given routinely and daily penicillin, 500 mg orally.

Most patients with a painful crisis are managed in the community, but hospital admission is necessary when the pain is not controlled by non-opiate analgesia such as paracetamol and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or if there are complications (Table 5.10). Many patients carry cards with details of their ideal analgesic regimen. The management of a painful sickle crisis is summarized in Emergency Box 5.2.

Blood transfusions are given only in certain situations including after transient ischaemic attacks and stroke, acute chest syndrome, splenic

**Table 5.10** Complications requiring inpatient management

|   |
|---|
| Pain – uncontrolled by non-opiate analgesia                                   |
| Swollen painful joints  |
| Acute sickle chest syndrome or pneumonia                                      |
| Mesenteric sickling and bowel ischaemia                                       |
| Splenic or hepatic sequestration  |
| Central nervous system deficit  |
| Cholecystitis (pigment stones)  |
| Cardiac arrhythmias   |
| Renal papillary necrosis resulting in colic or severe haematuria              |
| Hyphema (layer of red cells in anterior chamber of eye) or retinal detachment |
| Priapism  |

sequestration crisis, aplastic crises, before elective operation and during pregnancy.

Hydroxycarbamide (hydroxyurea) raises the concentration of fetal Hb and is used in some patients with recurrent painful crises. BMT from an HLA-matched sibling is used in some patients with severe disease.

### Sickle cell trait

In the heterozygous state, Hb AS, the blood count and film are normal. There are usually no symptoms unless extreme circumstances leading to hypoxia such as flying in a non-pressurized aircraft.

## Metabolic red cell disorders

A number of red cell enzyme deficiencies may produce haemolytic anaemia, the most common of which is glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency.

### Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency

G6PD is a vital enzyme in the hexose monophosphate shunt, which maintains glutathione in the reduced state. Glutathione protects against oxidant injury in the red cell. G6PD deficiency is a common heterogeneous X-linked trait found predominantly in African, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern populations.

G6PD deficiency causes neonatal jaundice, chronic haemolytic anaemia, and acute haemolysis precipitated by the ingestion of fava beans and a number of common drugs such as quinine, sulphonamides, quinolones and nitrofurantoin. Diagnosis is by direct measurement of enzyme levels in the red cell. Treatment is the avoidance of precipitating factors, and transfusion if necessary.



## Emergency Box 5.2

### Management of an acute painful sickle cell crisis in opioid-naïve adults

- **Analgesia**
  - Morphine/diamorphine 0.1 mg/kg i.v./s.c. every 20 minutes until pain controlled, then 0.05–0.1 mg/kg i.v./s.c./p.o. every 2–4 hours. Consider patient-controlled analgesia (PCA)
  - Side-effects of morphine include nausea, respiratory depression and hypotension
  - Give adjuvant non-opioid analgesia: paracetamol, ibuprofen, diclofenac
- **Prescribe** laxatives routinely and other adjuvants as necessary:
  - Laxatives: lactulose 10 mL twice daily, senna 2–4 tablets daily
  - Anti-pruritics: hydroxyzine 25 mg twice daily
  - Antiemetics: cyclizine 50 mg three times daily
  - Anxiolytic: haloperidol 1–3 mg oral/i.m. as required
- **Oxygen**, 60% by face mask if arterial oxygen saturation <95%
- **Rehydration**, encourage oral fluids 60 mL/kg/24 hours. Give i.v. or nasogastric fluids if insufficient intake orally
- **Investigations** in all patients: full blood count, reticulocyte count, urea and electrolytes – repeat daily. In others, depending on clinical circumstances: liver biochemistry, blood and urine cultures, chest X-ray, arterial blood gases (if saturations <95%), ultrasound of abdomen
- **Monitor** pain, sedation, vital signs, respiratory rate and oxygen saturations every 30 minutes until the pain is controlled and stable and then every 2 hours
- **Examine** daily: the respiratory system for the acute chest syndrome, and the abdomen for increase in liver or spleen size which may indicate a sequestration crisis

## ACQUIRED HAEMOLYTIC ANAEMIA

### Autoimmune haemolytic anaemia

Acquired haemolytic anaemia is due to immunological destruction of red blood cells mediated by autoantibodies directed against antigens on the patient's red blood cells. Autoimmune haemolytic anaemia is classified according to whether the antibody reacts best at body temperature (*warm antibodies*) or at lower temperatures (*cold antibodies*) (Table 5.11). IgG or IgM antibodies attach to the red cell, resulting in extravascular haemolysis

**Table 5.11** Features of autoimmune haemolytic anaemia

|   | Warm                           | Cold   |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Temperature at which antibody attaches best to red cell                       | 37 °C                          | Lower than 37 °C   |
| Type of antibody  | IgG                            | IgM  |
| Direct Coombs' test   | Strongly positive              | Positive   |
| Primary condition   | Idiopathic                     | Idiopathic   |
| Secondary causes  | Autoimmune disorders, e.g. SLE | Infections e.g. <i>Mycoplasma</i> spp.<br>Infectious mononucleosis |
|   | Lymphomas                      | Lymphomas  |
|   | CLL                            | Paroxysmal cold  |
|   | Carcinomas                     | Haemoglobinuria (rare)   |
|   | Many drugs, e.g. methyl dopa   |  |
| <i>SLE, systemic lupus erythematosus, CLL, chronic lymphocytic leukaemia.</i> |                                |  |

through sequestration in the spleen, or in intravascular haemolysis through activation of complement. The autoimmune haemolytic anaemias are diagnosed on the basis of a positive direct antiglobulin (Coombs') test. This is a test for antibodies or complement attached to the surface of red blood cells. The red blood cells of the patient are reacted with antiserum or monoclonal antibodies prepared against the various immunoglobulins and the third component of complement (C3d). If either or both of these are present on the red cell surface, agglutination of red cells will be detected.

## 'Warm' autoimmune haemolytic anaemia

### Clinical features

This anaemia occurs at all ages in both sexes, with a variable clinical picture ranging from mild haemolysis to life-threatening anaemia. It may be primary or secondary (Table 5.11).

### Investigation

There is evidence of haemolysis (p. 205) and direct Coombs' test is positive.

### Management

High-dose steroids (e.g. prednisolone 1 mg/kg daily) induce remission in 80% of cases. Splenectomy is useful in those failing to respond to steroids.

Occasionally, immunosuppressive drugs such as azathioprine and rituximab are beneficial.

## 'Cold' autoimmune haemolytic anaemia

### Clinical features

IgM antibodies (cold agglutinins) attach to red cells in the cold peripheral parts of the body and cause agglutination and complement-mediated intravascular haemolysis. After certain infections e.g. *Mycoplasma*, Epstein–Barr virus, there is increased synthesis of cold agglutinins (normally produced in insignificant amounts) and transient haemolysis. A chronic idiopathic form occurs in elderly people, with recurrent haemolysis and peripheral cyanosis.

### Investigation

There is evidence of haemolysis (p. 205), and direct Coombs' test is positive. Examination of a peripheral blood film at room temperature shows red cell agglutination.

### Management

Treatment is usually that of the underlying condition and avoiding exposure to cold.

### Drug-induced haemolysis

Two types of mechanisms have been identified:

- In the commonest form, the drug may associate with structures on the red cell membrane and thus be part of the antigen in a haptenic reaction. There is severe complement-mediated intravascular haemolysis which resolves quickly after drug withdrawal.
- The drug may induce a subtle alteration of one component of the red cell membrane, rendering it antigenic. There is extravascular haemolysis and a protracted clinical course.

The mechanisms for drug-induced haemolytic anaemia probably also apply to drug-induced thrombocytopenia and neutropenia.

## Non-immune haemolytic anaemia

### Paroxysmal nocturnal haemoglobinuria

There is an inability to produce the glycosylphosphatidylinositol (GPI) anchor, which tethers several proteins to the cell membrane. Deficiency of two of these proteins, CD59 (membrane inhibitor of reactive lysis) and CD55 (decay-accelerating factor), renders the red cell exquisitely sensitive to the haemolytic action of complement. The clinical manifestations of this rare disease are related to abnormalities in haemopoietic function including intravascular

haemolysis, venous thrombosis and bone marrow aplasia. Progression to myelodysplasia and acute leukaemia can also occur. Paroxysmal nocturnal haemoglobinuria should be considered in any patient with chronic or episodic haemolysis. Diagnosis is made by demonstrating deficiency of the GPI-anchored proteins on haematopoietic cells by flow cytometry. Treatment is supportive and with eculizumab, a monoclonal antibody that binds to the C5 component of complement and prevents its activation and reduces haemolysis. BMT has been successful in selected patients.

### Mechanical haemolytic anaemia

Red cells may be injured by physical trauma in the circulation. Examples of this form of haemolysis include:

- Leaking prosthetic heart valves: damage to red cells in their passage through the heart
- March haemoglobinuria: damage to red cells in the feet from prolonged marching
- Microangiopathic haemolysis: fragmentation of red cells in abnormal microcirculation caused by malignant hypertension, haemolytic-uraemic syndrome or disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC).

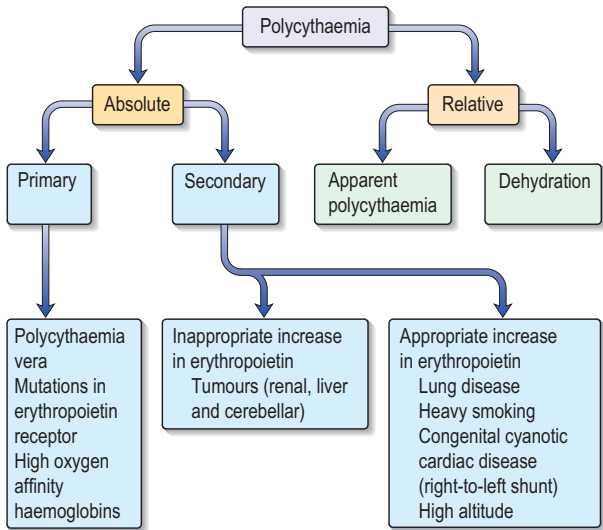
## MYELOPROLIFERATIVE DISORDERS

In these disorders there is uncontrolled clonal proliferation of one or more of the cell lines in the bone marrow, namely erythroid, myeloid and megakaryocyte lines. Myeloproliferative disorders include polycythaemia vera, essential thrombocythaemia, myelofibrosis (all of which have an mutation of the gene Janus kinase 2, *JAK-2*) and chronic myeloid leukaemia. These disorders are grouped together as there can be transition from one disease to another; for example, polycythaemia vera can lead to myelofibrosis, and they may also transform into acute leukaemia. They occur principally in middle-aged and elderly people. They differ from the acute leukaemias (also clonal proliferation of a single cell line), where the cells also do not differentiate normally but where there is progressive accumulation of immature cells.

### Polycythaemia

Polycythaemia is defined as an increase in Hb, PCV or RCC. These measurements are all concentrations and are therefore directly dependent on plasma volume as well as red blood cell mass. The production of red cells by the bone marrow is normally regulated by the hormone erythropoietin, which is produced in the kidney. The stimulus for erythropoietin production is tissue hypoxia.

In *absolute polycythaemia* there is an increase in the red cell mass. Primary polycythaemia is due to an acquired or inherited mutation leading to an abnormality within red blood progenitors. It includes polycythaemia vera



**Fig. 5.4** The causes of polycythaemia.

and rare familial variants. Secondary polycythaemia is caused by an erythropoietin response to chronic hypoxia or by an erythropoietin-secreting tumour (Fig. 5.4).

*Relative or apparent polycythaemia* (Gaisböck's syndrome) occurs in middle-aged obese men and is associated with smoking, increased alcohol intake and hypertension. The PCV is normal but plasma volume is decreased.

### Polycythaemia vera

Polycythaemia vera arises from a single haematopoietic progenitor cell and leads to excessive proliferation of red cells and a variable increase in platelets and myeloid cells. *JAK-2* mutations, present in over 95% of patients, lead to constitutive activation of its tyrosine kinase activity, which plays a pivotal role in cell proliferation and survival.

### Clinical features

Symptoms and signs are the result of hypervolaemia and hyperviscosity. Typical symptoms include headache, dizziness, tinnitus, visual disturbance, angina pectoris, intermittent claudication, pruritus and venous thrombosis. Physical signs include a plethoric complexion and hepatosplenomegaly as a result of extramedullary haemopoiesis. Splenomegaly, if present, reliably distinguishes polycythaemia vera from secondary polycythaemia. There is an



increased risk of haemorrhage as a result of friable haemostatic plugs, and gout caused by increased cell turnover and uric acid production.

## Investigations

Blood count showing raised white cell and platelet counts is suggestive of polycythaemia vera as opposed to other causes of polycythaemia. The diagnosis is made by demonstrating evidence of increased red cell volume (usually Hb >18.5 g/dL in men and >16.5 g/dL in women) and a gain of function mutation in *JAK-2* (e.g. V617F) together with one of:

- Erythroid hyperplasia, with increased numbers of megakaryocytes and granulocytes on bone marrow examination
- Serum erythropoietin levels below normal
- Erythroid colony formation in vitro in the absence of exogenous erythropoietin

## Management

There is no cure, and treatment is given to maintain a normal blood count and to prevent the complications of the disease, particularly thrombosis and haemorrhage.

- Venesection to maintain PCV <0.45 L/L. Regular venesection (e.g. 3-monthly) may be all that is needed in many patients.
- Chemotherapy. Hydroxycarbamide (hydroxyurea) and busulfan are used to reduce the platelet count.
- Low-dose aspirin with the above treatments is used for patients with recurrent thrombotic episodes.
- Radioactive phosphorus (<sup>32</sup>P) is only given to patients over 70 years of age because of the increased risk of leukaemic conversion with its use.
- Allopurinol is given to decrease uric acid levels.

## Secondary polycythaemia

Secondary polycythaemia presents with similar clinical features to primary polycythaemia, although the white cell and platelet counts are usually normal and the spleen is not enlarged. In patients with tumours the primary disease must be treated to lower the level of erythropoietin. In hypoxic patients, oxygen therapy (p. 520) may reduce the Hb, and a small-volume phlebotomy (400 mL) may help those with severe symptoms. Smokers should be advised to stop smoking.

## Essential thrombocythaemia

Patients have normal Hb levels and white cell count but elevated platelet count. Platelet size and function are abnormal, and presentation may be with bleeding or thrombosis. Differential diagnosis is from secondary causes of a

**Table 5.12** Differential diagnosis of a raised platelet count

|   |
|---|
| Reactive thrombocytosis                 |
| Autoimmune rheumatic disorders          |
| Chronic infections                      |
| Inflammatory bowel disease              |
| Malignancy                              |
| Haemorrhage                             |
| Surgery                                 |
| Splenectomy and functional hyposplenism |
| Primary thrombocythaemia                |
| Polycythaemia vera                      |
| Myelofibrosis                           |
| Myelodysplasia                          |

raised platelet count and other myeloproliferative disorders (Table 5.12). There is no global gold standard diagnostic test but in general an otherwise well person with a platelet count of  $>1000 \times 10^9/L$  will have essential thrombocythaemia. Busulfan, hydroxycarbamide (hydroxyurea), anagrelide or interferon alfa are used to reduce platelet production.

### Myelofibrosis (myelosclerosis)

Myelofibrosis is characterized by haemopoietic stem cell proliferation associated with marrow fibrosis (abnormal megakaryocyte precursors release fibroblast-stimulating factors, such as platelet-derived growth factor).

### Clinical features

There is an insidious onset of weakness, weight loss and lethargy. Bleeding occurs in the thrombocytopenic patient. There is hepatomegaly and massive splenomegaly caused by extramedullary haemopoiesis.

### Investigations

- Blood count shows anaemia. The white cell and platelet counts are high initially, but fall with disease progression as a result of marrow fibrosis.
- Blood film examination shows a leucoerythroblastic picture (immature red cells caused by marrow infiltration) and 'teardrop'-shaped red cells.
- Bone marrow is usually unobtainable by aspiration ('dry tap'); trephine biopsy shows increased fibrosis.
- The Philadelphia chromosome is absent; this and the bone marrow appearance helps to distinguish myelofibrosis from chronic myeloid leukaemia, which may present similarly.

## Management

- Transfusions are given for anaemia and allopurinol to decrease serum uric acid levels.
- Hydroxycarbamide (hydroxyurea) or busulfan are used to reduce the raised white cell and platelet count.
- Splenic irradiation may be useful to reduce a large painful spleen.
- Splenectomy is performed if the spleen is very large and painful and the transfusion requirements are high.

## Myelodysplasia

Myelodysplasia is a group of acquired bone marrow disorders caused by a defect in stem cells. There is progressive bone marrow failure, which tends to evolve into acute myeloid leukaemia. The myelodysplastic syndromes are predominantly diseases of the elderly, and are increasingly being diagnosed when a routine full blood count shows an unexplained macrocytosis, anaemia, thrombocytopenia or neutropenia. The diagnosis is made on the basis of characteristic blood film and bone marrow appearances. The paradox of peripheral pancytopenia and a hypercellular bone marrow reflects premature cell loss by apoptosis.

Supportive treatment (red cell and platelet transfusions) is given to elderly patients with symptomatic disease. For younger patients, intensive chemotherapy (as used for acute myeloblastic leukaemia) or allogeneic BMT are used. Lenalidomide (a thalidomide analogue) is used in the treatment of early-stage disease.

## THE SPLEEN

The spleen, situated in the left hypochondrium, is the largest lymphoid organ in the body. Its main functions are phagocytosis of old red blood cells, immunological defence, and to act as a 'pool' of blood from which cells may be rapidly mobilized. Pluripotential stem cells are present in the spleen and proliferate in severe haematological stress (*extramedullary haemopoiesis*), e.g. haemolytic anaemia.

## Hypersplenism

Hypersplenism can result from splenomegaly of any cause (Table 5.13). It results in pancytopenia, increased plasma volume and haemolysis. The normal spleen length on ultrasound examination is <13 cm.

**Table 5.13** Causes of splenomegaly

| Massive (extending into right iliac fossa) | Moderate  |
|--|---|
| Chronic myeloid leukaemia                  | Lymphoma  |
| Myelofibrosis                              | Leukaemia   |
| Chronic malaria                            | Myeloproliferative disorders                      |
| Kala-azar                                  | Haemolytic anaemia                                |
| Gaucher's disease (rarely)                 | Acute infection, e.g. endocarditis, typhoid       |
|  | Chronic infection, e.g. tuberculosis, brucellosis |
|  | Parasitic, e.g. malaria                           |
|  | Rheumatoid arthritis                              |
|  | Sarcoidosis                                       |
|  | Systemic lupus erythematosus                      |
|  | Storage diseases e.g. Gaucher's                   |
|  | Tropical splenomegaly                             |

## Splenectomy

This is performed mainly for:

- Trauma
- Idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura
- Haemolytic anaemias
- Hypersplenism.

Complications after splenectomy are an increased platelet count (thrombophilia) in the short term and overwhelming infection in the long term, particularly with *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *H. influenzae* and the meningococci. Pneumococcal, *Haemophilus*, meningococcal group C and influenza vaccination is given before elective splenectomy. Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine is given for travellers to Africa and Saudi Arabia. In addition, the patient is given lifelong penicillin V 500 mg twice daily or erythromycin if they are allergic to penicillin.

## BLOOD TRANSFUSION

The components of whole blood are prepared by differential centrifugation of blood collected from volunteer donors.

- Blood components, such as red cell and platelet concentrates, fresh frozen plasma (FFP) and cryoprecipitate, are prepared from single donors.

- Blood components such as coagulation factor concentrates, albumin and immunoglobulin are prepared using plasma from many donors as the starting material.

**Whole blood** is rarely used, even for acute blood loss. Use of the required component is a more effective use of a scarce resource.

**Red cell concentrates** the plasma is removed from whole blood and replaced with an additive solution. Storage is at 4°C with a shelf-life of 35 days and transfusion should be completed within 4 hours of removal from cold storage. Red cell concentrates are used for acute bleeds in combination with crystalloid or colloid and correction of anaemia. Transfusion of red cells in addition to colloid is usually only necessary when >30% (>1500 mL in an adult) of circulating volume has been lost (p. 576). This degree of blood loss is manifest by reduced systolic and diastolic blood pressure, pulse rate >120/min, slow capillary refill and respiratory rate >20/min. The patient will be pale and may be anxious and aggressive. Transfusion may be required for lesser degrees of blood loss that are superimposed on a pre-existing anaemia or reduced cardiorespiratory reserve capacity. Transfusion of red cells is rarely necessary for correction of chronic anaemia (where the underlying cause should be treated) unless the anaemia is severe and life-threatening.

**Platelet concentrates** are stored at +20°–24°C. Cold storage causes irreversible platelet aggregation. Platelets are used to treat or prevent bleeding in patients with severe thrombocytopenia. They are not used in stable chronic thrombocytopenia without bleeding. For platelet transfusion, the ABO and RhD group of the patient must be known and the same bedside checks and monitoring procedures as for red cell transfusion must be used. Usually 1 unit (250 mL of plasma containing  $>40 \times 10^9/L$  platelets) is given, and the platelet count should rise by  $>20 \times 10^9/L$ .

**Fresh frozen plasma** is separated from blood cells and frozen for storage. It contains all the coagulation factors and is used in acquired coagulation factor deficiencies.

**Cryoprecipitate** is the supernatant obtained after thawing of FFP at 4°C. It contains factor VIII:C, von Willebrand factor (vWF) and fibrinogen and is used in DIC where the fibrinogen level is very low ( $<1.0$  g/L).

**Factor VIII and IX concentrates** are used for the treatment of haemophilia and von Willebrand disease where recombinant factor concentrates are unavailable.

**Albumin** (4.5% and 20%) are given to patients with acute severe hypoalbuminaemia and to patients with liver disease and nephrotic syndrome (20% solution) who are fluid overloaded and resistant to diuretics.

**Immunoglobulins** are used in patients with hypogammaglobulinaemia to prevent infection and in patients with idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura. Specific immunoglobulin, e.g. anti-hepatitis B, is used after exposure of a non-immune patient to infections.

**Table 5.14** The ABO system: antigens and antibodies

| Blood group | Red cell antigen | Antibody in patient's plasma |
|-------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| A           | A                | Anti-B                       |
| B           | B                | Anti-A                       |
| AB          | AB               | No antibodies to A or B      |
| O           | No A or B        | Anti A and anti-B            |

*Blood groups O and A are the most common in the UK.*

## Blood groups

The blood groups are determined by antigens on the surface of red cells. The ABO and rhesus (Rh) systems are the two major blood groups. In the ABO groups individuals produce antibodies against the antigen that are not present on their own red cells (Table 5.14). If red cells carrying A or B antigens are transfused to someone who has antibodies to these then a severe immune reaction will occur leading to shock and DIC (p. 235) which may be fatal within minutes to hours. Patients with blood group AB can receive blood of any other ABO group and are known as universal recipients. Most of the population carry RhD antigens (Rh +ve) on their red cells and they can receive any RhD type blood. RhD –ve patients should receive RhD –ve blood. Exposure to RhD +ve blood through transfusion or pregnancy will lead to development of anti-D.

## Procedure for blood transfusion

Compatibility testing is performed by the transfusion service in order to select donor blood of the correct ABO and Rh group for the recipient and to screen the patient's serum or plasma for antibodies against other red cell antigens (such as Kell and Duffy) that may cause a transfusion reaction. After a massive bleed when immediate transfusion is necessary, O RhD –ve blood can be given without any transfusion investigations being undertaken. It should need to be used only on rare occasions.

Many hospitals have guidelines for the ordering of blood for elective surgery. Operations in which blood is required only occasionally can be classified as 'group and save', in order to conserve blood usage. In this case ABO and Rh testing is performed along with the antibody screen. Should blood unexpectedly be required during the course of the procedure, compatible units can be released within a matter of minutes after an immediate spin cross-match, whereby the patient's serum or plasma is incubated with the donor red cells to confirm compatibility.

**Table 5.15** Care of the patient receiving a blood transfusion or blood products**1 Taking the blood sample for cross-matching**

Identify patient positively by asking their surname, forename, date of birth  
 Confirm ID details on hospital wrist band match those on transfusion request form

Label sample tube after blood has been added

Label sample tube with patient identification (full name, date of birth, hospital number), patient location, date of sample and signature of person taking blood

**2 Procedure for patient identification before transfusion**

Check the blood bag is not leaking or wet and has a compatibility label attached

Check patient identity (full name, sex, date of birth, hospital number) matches that on the blood transfusion request form and compatibility label attached to the blood pack. This is now usually done by a handheld computer reading a barcode on the patient's wristband and the compatibility label and ensuring a match.

Check intravenous fluid prescription chart

**3 Blood checks**

Check expiry date of the blood on compatibility label and blood bag

Check blood group and blood pack donation number on blood transfusion request form, blood pack and compatibility label

Record the blood pack donation number on intravenous fluid prescription chart  
 Date, time and signature on blood transfusion request form, compatibility label, intravenous fluid prescription chart

Blood transfusion is a potentially hazardous procedure, which should only be undertaken when the benefits outweigh the risks. Stringent procedures need to be followed to ensure that the correct blood is given to the correct patient and that any adverse reactions are dealt with promptly and efficiently (Table 5.15). The temperature, pulse rate and blood pressure should be recorded before the start of each unit, 15 minutes after the start and at hourly intervals during the transfusion. A temperature rise of 1 °C or greater above baseline may indicate an acute haemolytic transfusion reaction due to blood group incompatibility and is an indication to stop the transfusion.

**Complications of transfusing red blood cells**

- ABO incompatibility is the most serious complication. It usually results from simple clerical errors, leading to the incorrect labelling and identification of the correct patient receiving the correct blood at the correct

time. Within minutes of starting the transfusion there is pyrexia, rigors, dyspnoea, hypotension, loin and back pain. Intravascular haemolysis leads to dark urine. The transfusion must be stopped and the donor units returned to the blood transfusion laboratory for testing with a new blood sample from the patient. Emergency treatment may be needed to maintain the blood pressure (p. 578). Autoimmune haemolysis may develop about a week after transfusion in patients alloimmunized by previous transfusions in whom the antibody level is too low to be detected during compatibility testing.

- Febrile reactions are usually the result of anti-leucocyte antibodies in the recipient acting against transfused leucocytes, leading to the release of pyrogens. These reactions are less common since the introduction of leucocyte-depleted blood.
- Anaphylactic reactions are seen in patients lacking IgA but who produce anti-IgA that reacts with IgA in the transfused blood. This is a medical emergency (p. 576). Urticarial reactions are treated by slowing of the infusion and giving intravenous antihistamines, e.g. chlorphenamine (chlorpheniramine) 10 mg i.v.
- Transmission of infection has decreased now that donated blood is tested for hepatitis B surface antigen and antibodies to hepatitis C, HIV-1 (human immunodeficiency virus) and HTLV-1 (human T-cell lymphotropic virus). Cytomegalovirus (CMV)-seronegative blood is given to immunosuppressed patients who are susceptible to acquiring CMV infection.
- Heart failure may occur, particularly in elderly people and those having large transfusions.
- Complications of massive transfusion (>10 units within 24 hours) include hypocalcaemia, hyperkalaemia and hypothermia. Bleeding may occur as a result of depletion of platelets and clotting factors in stored blood.
- Post-transfusion purpura is rare. Antibodies develop against the human platelet antigen 1a leading to immune destruction of the patient's own platelets and thrombocytopenia 2–12 days after a blood transfusion.

Concerns about the safety of blood transfusion have led to increased interest in strategies for avoiding or reducing the use of donor blood. These include artificial haemoglobin solutions and autologous blood transfusion. The latter is more popular in developing countries and involves collection of blood from the donor/patient either pre-operatively or by intraoperative blood salvage.

## THE WHITE CELL

The five types of leucocytes (white cells) found in peripheral blood are neutrophils, eosinophils and basophils (which are all called granulocytes) and lymphocytes and monocytes. *Leucocytosis* and *leucopenia* describe an increase ( $>11 \times 10^9/L$ ) and a decrease ( $<4.0 \times 10^9/L$ ) respectively in the total circulating white cells.



## Neutrophils

The prime function of neutrophils is to ingest and kill bacteria, fungi and damaged cells.

**Neutrophil leucocytosis** ( $>10 \times 10^9/L$ ) occurs in bacterial infection, tissue necrosis, inflammation, corticosteroid therapy, myeloproliferative disease, acute haemorrhage, haemolysis, leukaemoid reaction (excessive leucocytosis characterized by the presence of immature cells in the peripheral blood) and leucoerythroblastic anaemia (immature red and white cells appear in the peripheral blood in marrow infiltration e.g. malignancy, myeloid leukaemia, severe anaemia). A 'left shift' describes the presence of immature white cells (promyelocytes, myelocytes and metamyelocytes) in the peripheral blood and occurs with infection and in leucoerythroblastic anaemia.

**Neutropenia** is a decrease in circulating neutrophils in the peripheral blood ( $<1.5 \times 10^9/L$ ). Causes include racial (in black Africans), viral infection, severe bacterial infection, megaloblastic anaemia, pancytopenia, drugs (marrow aplasia or immune destruction) and inherited abnormalities. An absolute neutrophil count of  $<0.5 \times 10^9/L$  is regarded as severe neutropenia and may be associated with life-threatening infections. The management of neutropenic sepsis is summarized in Emergency Box 5.1.

## Monocytes

Monocytes are precursors of tissue macrophages. Monocytosis (normal range  $0.04\text{--}0.44 \times 10^9/L$ , 1–6% of total white cells) occurs in chronic bacterial infections (e.g. tuberculosis), myelodysplasia and malignancy, particularly chronic myelomonocytic leukaemia.

## Eosinophils

Eosinophils play a part in allergic responses and in the defence against infections with helminths and protozoa. Eosinophilia (normal range  $0.04\text{--}0.44 \times 10^9/L$ , 1–6% of total white cells) occurs in asthma and allergic disorders, parasitic infections (e.g. *Ascaris*), skin disorders (urticaria, pemphigus and eczema), malignancy and the hyper-eosinophilic syndrome (restrictive cardiomyopathy hepatosplenomegaly and very high eosinophil count).

## Lymphocytes

There are two types: T and B lymphocytes. Lymphocytosis occurs in response to viral infection, chronic infections (e.g. tuberculosis and toxoplasmosis), chronic lymphocytic leukaemia and some lymphomas.

## HAEMOSTASIS AND THROMBOSIS

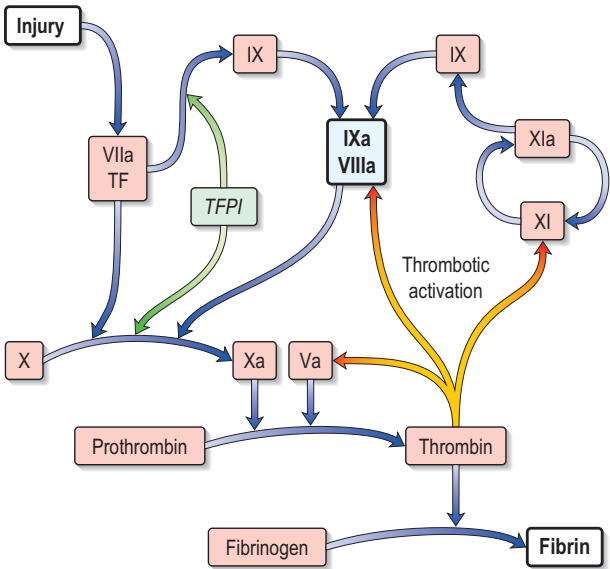
A bleeding disorder is suggested when the patient has unexplained (i.e. no history of trauma) bruising or bleeding, or prolonged bleeding in response to injury or surgery, e.g. after tooth extraction.

### Haemostasis

Haemostasis is the process of blood clot formation at the site of vessel injury. When a blood vessel wall breaks, the haemostatic response must be quick, localized to the site of injury, and carefully regulated. Abnormal bleeding or a propensity to non-physiological thrombosis (i.e. thrombosis not required for haemostatic regulation) may occur when specific elements of these processes are missing or dysfunctional.

Haemostasis is a complex process and depends on interactions between the vessel wall, platelets and coagulation and fibrinolytic mechanisms.

- **Vessel wall** Platelet adhesion and thrombus formation is inhibited on the intact endothelium by its negative charge and also by antithrombotic factors (thrombomodulin, heparin sulphate, prostacyclin, nitric oxide, plasminogen activator). Injury to vessels leads to immediate vasoconstriction, thus reducing blood flow to the injured area, and endothelial damage results in loss of antithrombotic properties.
- **Platelets** Intimal injury and exposure of subendothelial elements leads to *platelet adherence*, via the platelet membrane receptor glycoprotein Ib (GpIb), to collagen and vWF in the subendothelial matrix. GpIIb/IIIa receptor on the platelet surface is then exposed forming a second binding site for vWF. Deficiency of GPIb or vWF leads to congenital bleeding disorders: Bernard–Soulier disease and von Willebrand’s disease, respectively. Following adhesion, platelets spread along the subendothelium and *release* the contents of their cytoplasmic granules containing adenosine diphosphate (ADP), serotonin, thromboxane A<sub>2</sub>, fibrinogen and other factors. ADP leads to a conformational change in the glycoprotein (Gp)IIb/IIIa receptor allowing it to bind to fibrinogen, a dimer that acts as a bridge between platelets and so binds them into aggregates (*platelet aggregation*). During aggregation, platelet membrane receptors are exposed, providing a surface for the interaction of coagulation factors and ultimately the formation of a stable haemostatic plug.
- **Coagulation** Coagulation involves a series of enzymatic reactions leading to the conversion of soluble plasma fibrinogen to fibrin clot (Fig. 5.5). The local generation of fibrin enmeshes and reinforces the platelet plug. Coagulation is initiated by tissue damage. This exposes tissue factor (TF) which binds to factor VII and this complex has the dual effect of converting factor X to factor Xa (‘a’ indicates active) and factor IX to factor IXa. Generation of factor Xa alone is insufficient to allow haemostasis to



**Fig. 5.5** Coagulation mechanism. The in vivo pathway begins with tissue factor–factor VIIa complex activating factor X and also factor IX. Factor XI is activated by thrombin. TF, tissue factor; TFPI, tissue factor pathway inhibitor.

proceed to completion. Factor VIII consists of a molecule with coagulant activity (VIII:C) associated with vWF, which prevents premature breakdown of VIII:C. Factor VIII increases the activity of factor IXa by about 200 000-fold. All of the coagulation factors are synthesized in the liver and vWF is synthesized by endothelial cells and megakaryocytes. The vitamin K-dependent enzymes are prothrombin, factors VII, IX and X.

- *Physiological limitation of coagulation* Coagulation would lead to dangerous occlusion of blood vessels if it was not limited to the site of injury by protective mechanisms. Antithrombin binds to and forms complexes with coagulation factors thereby inactivating them. Its activity is increased by heparin. Activated protein C inactivates factors V and VIII and this is enhanced by the cofactor, protein S. Inherited deficiency or abnormality of these natural anticoagulant proteins is termed *thrombophilia* and places the patient at increased risk of venous thromboembolism (p. 237).
- *Fibrinolysis* Fibrinolysis is a normal haemostatic response that helps to restore vessel patency after vascular damage. The plasma protein plasminogen is converted to plasmin by activators (principally tissue plasminogen activator, tPA) released from endothelial cells. Plasmin breaks

**Table 5.16** Classification of bleeding disorders**Blood vessel defect**

## Hereditary

Hereditary haemorrhagic telangiectasia

Connective tissue disorders, e.g. Marfan's, Ehlers–Danlos syndromes

## Acquired

Severe infections, e.g. meningococcal, typhoid

Drugs: steroids, sulphonamides

Allergic: Henoch–Schönlein purpura, autoimmune rheumatic disorders

Others: scurvy, senile purpura, easy bruising syndrome

**Platelet defect**

Thrombocytopenia (see Table 5.17)

## Platelet dysfunction

Inherited e.g. Bernard–Soulier syndrome

Acquired: renal and liver disease, paraproteinaemias, platelet inhibitory drugs e.g. aspirin

**Coagulation defect**

Hereditary: haemophilia A or B, von Willebrand's disease

Acquired: anticoagulant treatment, liver disease, disseminated intravascular coagulation

down fibrin and fibrinogen into fragments collectively known as fibrin degradation products (FDPs), which include D-dimers.

Bleeding disorders are therefore the result of a defect in vessels, platelets or the coagulation pathway (Table 5.16).

**Investigation of bleeding disorders**

The nature of the defect and therefore the most appropriate initial investigations may be suggested by the history and examination, e.g. family history, intercurrent disease, alcohol consumption, drugs. Vascular/platelet bleeding is characterized by bruising of the skin and bleeding from mucosal membranes. Bleeding into the skin is manifest as petechiae (small capillary haemorrhages, a few millimetres in diameter) and superficial ecchymoses (larger areas of bleeding). Haemophilia A and B are typically associated with spontaneous haemarthroses (bleeding into joints) and muscle haematomas. The most common cause of abnormal bleeding is thrombocytopenia.

- Platelet count and blood film will show the number and morphology of platelets and any blood disorder such as leukaemia.
- Coagulation tests are abnormal with deficiencies or inhibitors of the clotting factors. If the abnormal result is corrected by the addition of normal

plasma to the patient's plasma in the assay, then the result is abnormal as a result of deficiency and not of inhibitors.

- The prothrombin time (PT) is prolonged with abnormalities of factors VII, X, V, II or I, liver disease, or if the patient is on warfarin. The international normalized ratio (INR) is the ratio of the patient's PT to a normal control when using the international reference preparation. The advantage of the INR over the PT is that it uses international standards and thus anticoagulant control in different hospitals across the world can be compared.
- The activated partial thromboplastin time (APTT) is prolonged with deficiencies or inhibitors of one or more of the following factors: XII, XI, IX, VIII, X, V or I (but not factor VII). Heparin prolongs the APTT.
- Thrombin time (TT) is prolonged with fibrinogen deficiency, dysfibrinogenaemia (normal levels but abnormal function), heparin treatment or DIC.
- The normal ranges of these tests vary from laboratory to laboratory, and patient results must be compared with the testing laboratory's reference range.
- The bleeding time is a measure of the interaction of platelets with the blood vessel wall and is abnormal in von Willebrand's disease, in blood vessel defects, and when there is a decrease in the number or function of platelets.

These tests will localize the site of the problem. Further specialized investigations, e.g. platelet aggregation studies and measurement of fibrinogen, FDPs and individual clotting factors, will be necessary to identify the exact haemostatic defect correctly.

## Platelet disorders

Platelet disorders are the result of thrombocytopenia (platelet count  $<150 \times 10^9/L$ ; Table 5.17) or disorders of platelet function, e.g. those occurring with aspirin treatment and uraemia. Congenital abnormalities of platelet number (e.g. Fanconi's anaemia, Wiskott–Aldrich syndrome) or function (e.g. Bernard–Soulier syndrome) are all extremely rare.

Mild thrombocytopenia can be artefactual and due to platelet clumping or a blood clot in the sample. This is excluded by asking the haematologist to confirm an unexpectedly low count by manual differentiation. Spontaneous bleeding from skin and mucous membranes is unlikely to occur with platelet counts above  $20 \times 10^9/L$ . Increased destruction or decreased production can be differentiated by bone marrow examination, which will show respectively increased or decreased numbers of megakaryocytes (platelet precursors). Platelet transfusion is usually indicated when the platelet count is very low ( $<10 \times 10^9/L$ ) or to maintain a platelet count of  $>50 \times 10^9/L$  in the presence of active bleeding or prior to an invasive procedure.

**Table 5.17** Causes of thrombocytopenia

| Impaired production          | Excessive destruction                                     |
|------------------------------|---|
| Bone marrow failure          | Immune  |
| Megaloblastic anaemia        | Autoimmune – ITP  |
| Leukaemia                    | Secondary immune (SLE, CLL, viruses, drugs, e.g. heparin) |
| Myeloma                      | Post-transfusion purpura                                  |
| Myelofibrosis                | Other   |
| Myelodysplasia               | Disseminated intravascular coagulation                    |
| Solid tumour infiltration    | Thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura                       |
| Aplastic anaemia (Table 5.6) | Haemolytic uraemic syndrome                               |
| HIV infection                | Sequestration   |
|                              | Hypersplenism   |
|                              | Dilutional  |
|                              | Massive transfusion                                       |

*ITP, immune thrombocytopenic purpura; SLE, systemic lupus erythematosus; CLL, chronic lymphocytic leukaemia.*  
*Thrombocytopenia due to impaired production is selective megakaryocyte depression (drugs, chemicals) or more often also associated with failure of red and white cell production.*

## Immune thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP)

There is immune destruction of platelets.

- *ITP in children* often follows viral infection. There is rapid onset of purpura, which is usually self-limiting.
- *ITP in adults* is usually less acute than in children and is characteristically seen in young women. It may occur with other autoimmune disorders, e.g. systemic lupus erythematosus and thyroid disease, in patients with chronic lymphatic leukaemia and after infection with some viruses, e.g. HIV. There is a fluctuating course, with easy bruising, epistaxis and menorrhagia. Major haemorrhage is rare.

## Investigation

There is thrombocytopenia with normal or increased megakaryocytes on bone marrow examination. The detection of platelet autoantibodies (present in 60–70%) is not essential for diagnosis, which often depends on exclusion of other causes of excessive destruction of platelets.

## Management

Patients with platelet counts greater than  $30 \times 10^9/L$  require no treatment unless they are about to undergo a surgical procedure. Platelet transfusions are reserved for intracranial or other extreme haemorrhage.

**First-line therapy** Oral corticosteroids 1 mg/kg body weight produces a response in two-thirds of patients but relapse is common when the dose is reduced. Intravenous immunoglobulin (i.v. IgG) is useful where a rapid rise in platelet count is desired, especially before surgery.

**Second-line therapy** is splenectomy, to which the majority of patients respond. For those that fail splenectomy possible treatments include high-dose corticosteroids, i.v. IgG, intravenous anti-D, vinca alkaloids, danazol and immunosuppressive agents such as azathioprine, ciclosporin and dapsone. There is also interest in the use of rituximab and romiplostim, a thrombopoiesis protein.

## Thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP)

Widespread adhesion and aggregation of platelets lead to microvascular thrombosis and profound thrombocytopenia. This occurs due to deficiency of ADAMTS 13, a protease which is normally responsible for degradation of vWF. ADAMTS 13 deficiency is congenital, sporadic or autoantibody mediated (pregnancy, systemic lupus erythematosus, infection, drug treatment e.g. clopidogrel). There is florid purpura, fever, fluctuating cerebral dysfunction and haemolytic anaemia with red cell fragmentation, often accompanied by renal failure. The coagulation screen is usually normal but lactate dehydrogenase levels are markedly raised as a result of haemolysis. Treatment is with plasma exchange (to remove the antibody to ADAMTS 13), methylprednisolone and rituximab. Platelet concentrates are contraindicated.

## Inherited coagulation disorders

Inherited disorders usually involve a deficiency of only one coagulation factor, whereas acquired disorders involve a deficiency of several factors.

### Haemophilia A

This is the result of a deficiency of factor VIII : C (p. 229). It is inherited as an X-linked recessive, affecting 1 in 5000 males.

## Clinical features

Clinical features depend on the plasma levels of factor VIII : C.

- *Levels <1 IU/dL* (severe disease) are associated with frequent spontaneous bleeding into muscles and joints that can lead to a crippling arthropathy.
- *Levels 1–5 IU/dL* are associated with severe bleeding following injury and occasional apparently spontaneous episodes.

- *Levels >5 IU/dL* produce mild disease with bleeding only with trauma or surgery.

HIV and liver disease (due to hepatitis C) are common as a result of transmission from infected factor concentrates that were given prior to 1986. Since 1986 plasma-derived products are all virally inactivated. Cerebral haemorrhage is much more frequent than in the general population.

## Investigations

There is a prolonged APTT and reduced plasma level of factor VIII. The PT, bleeding time and vWF are normal.

## Management

- Intravenous infusion of recombinant factor VIII concentrate is the treatment of choice and is used in preference to plasma-derived concentrates where possible. It is given as prophylaxis, e.g. before and after surgery, or to treat an acute bleeding episode. Patients with severe haemophilia are given prophylaxis three times weekly from early childhood to prevent permanent joint damage. Many patients also have a supply of factor VIII concentrate at home to inject at the first sign of bleeding.
- Synthetic vasopressin (desmopressin) – intravenous, subcutaneous or intranasal administration – raises the level of factor VIII and is used to treat some patients with mild haemophilia.
- Patients should be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B and encouraged to take part in exercise regimens that avoid contact sport.

## Complications

Recurrent bleeding into joints leads to deformity and arthritis. The risk of infection (hepatitis C and HIV) from multiple transfusions of plasma-derived clotting factor concentrates has been virtually eliminated because of the exclusion of high-risk blood donors, screening of donors and heat treatment of factor VIII concentrates. Ten per cent of people with haemophilia develop antibodies to factor VIII, and may need massive doses to overcome this. Recombinant factor VIIa is also used to 'bypass' the inhibitor.

## Haemophilia B (Christmas disease)

This is the result of a deficiency of factor IX, and affects 1 in 30 000 males. Inheritance and clinical features are the same as for haemophilia A. Treatment is with factor IX concentrates. Desmopressin is ineffective.

## von Willebrand's disease

Deficiency of vWF leads to defective platelet function (p. 228) as well as factor VIII deficiency (p. 229).



## Clinical features

Types 1 and 2 are mild forms, with autosomal dominant inheritance, and characterized by mucosal bleeding (nose bleeds and gastrointestinal bleeding) and prolonged bleeding after dental treatment or surgery.

Type 3 patients (recessively inherited) have more severe bleeding, but rarely experience the joint and muscle bleeds seen in haemophilia A.

## Investigations

Prolonged bleeding time reflects a defect in platelet adhesion. There is a prolonged APTT, normal PT and decreased plasma levels of VIII:C and vWF.

## Management

This depends on the severity of the bleeding, and includes treatment with desmopressin and factor VIII concentrates, which contain vWF.

## Acquired coagulation disorders

### Vitamin K deficiency

Vitamin K is needed for the formation of active factors II, VII, IX and X. Deficiency occurs with malnutrition, malabsorption and with warfarin treatment (an inhibitor of vitamin K synthesis). There is an increase in PT and APTT. Treatment is with phytomenadione (vitamin K, p. 242).

### Disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC)

There is widespread generation of fibrin within blood vessels, caused by initiation of the coagulation pathway. There is consumption of platelets and coagulation factors, and secondary activation of fibrinolysis, leading to production of FDPs, which contribute to coagulation by inhibiting fibrin polymerization.

### Aetiology

DIC results from massive activation of the clotting cascade. The major initiating factors are the release or expression of tissue factor, extensive damage to vascular endothelium exposing tissue factor or enhanced expression of tissue factor by monocytes in response to cytokines. The most common causes are sepsis, major trauma and tissue destruction (surgery, burns), advanced cancer and obstetric complications (amniotic fluid embolism, abruptio placentae). DIC occurs in most cases of acute promyelocytic leukaemia due to generation of procoagulant substances in the blood.

## Clinical features

The presentation varies from no bleeding at all to complete haemostatic failure, with bleeding from venepuncture sites and the nose and mouth.

Thrombotic events may occur as a result of vessel occlusion by platelets and fibrin.

## Investigations

The diagnosis is suggested by the history (e.g. severe sepsis, trauma, malignancy), the clinical presentation and the presence of severe thrombocytopenia. It is confirmed by finding a prolonged PT, APTT and TT, decreased fibrinogen and elevated FDPs. The blood film shows fragmented red cells. In mild cases with compensatory increase of coagulation factors, the only abnormality may be an increase in the FDPs, or in the D-dimer fragment reflecting accelerated fibrinolysis.

## Management

- Treat the underlying condition.
- Platelets concentrates (to maintain count  $>50 \times 10^9/L$ ), FFP, cryoprecipitate and red cell concentrates are indicated in patients who are bleeding.

## Liver disease

Liver disease results in a number of defects of haemostasis: vitamin K deficiency in cholestasis, reduced synthesis of clotting factors, thrombocytopenia and functional abnormalities of platelets. DIC may occur in acute liver failure.

## THROMBOSIS

A thrombus is defined as a solid mass formed in the circulation from the constituents of the blood during life. Fragments of thrombi (emboli) may break off and block vessels downstream.

## Arterial thrombosis

Arterial thrombosis is usually the result of atheroma, which forms particularly in areas of turbulent blood flow, such as the bifurcation of arteries. Platelets adhere to the damaged vascular endothelium and aggregate in response to ADP and thromboxane  $A_2$ . This may stimulate blood coagulation, leading to complete occlusion of the vessel, or embolization resulting in distal obstruction. Arterial emboli may also form in the left ventricle after myocardial infarction, in the left atrium in mitral valve disease, or on the surface of prosthetic valves.

## Prevention

Prevention of arterial thrombosis is achieved by minimizing risk factors associated with atherosclerosis (p. 445) and with antiplatelet drugs.

- Aspirin (p. 243) irreversibly inhibits cyclo-oxygenase, reducing platelet production of thromboxane A<sub>2</sub> (p. 228). It is the most commonly used antiplatelet drug.
- Dipyridamole inhibits phosphodiesterase-mediated breakdown of cyclic AMP, which prevents platelet activation.
- Clopidogrel (p. 243) blocks platelet aggregation and prolongs platelet survival by inhibiting the binding of ADP to its platelet receptor. Prasugrel is similar and is undergoing trials.
- Antibodies (e.g. abciximab), peptides (e.g. eptifibatide) and non-peptide antagonists (e.g. tirofiban) block the receptor of GpIIb/IIIa, inhibiting the final common pathway of platelet aggregation (p. 228). They are used as an adjunct in invasive coronary artery intervention and as primary medical therapy in coronary artery disease. Excessive bleeding has been a problem.
- Epoprostenol is a prostacyclin which is used to inhibit platelet aggregation during renal dialysis (with or without heparin) and is also used in primary pulmonary hypertension.

## Treatment

This is with thrombolytic therapy (p. 247). Streptokinase is a purified fraction of the filtrate obtained from cultures of haemolytic streptococci. It forms a complex with plasminogen, which activates other plasminogen molecules to form plasmin. Tissue-type plasminogen activators such as alteplase (t-PA), tenecteplase (TNK-PA) and reteplase (r-PA) are produced using recombinant gene technology. Unlike streptokinase, they are not antigenic and do not produce allergic reactions, though they have a slightly higher risk of intracerebral haemorrhage. The use of thrombolytic therapy in myocardial infarction, pulmonary embolism and ischaemic stroke is discussed on pages 455, 475, and 748, respectively.

## Venous thrombosis

Unlike arterial thrombosis, venous thrombosis usually occurs in normal vessels, often in the deep veins of the leg. It originates around the valves as red thrombi consisting of red cells and fibrin. Propagation occurs, inducing a risk of embolization to the pulmonary vessels. Chronic venous obstruction in the leg results in a permanently swollen leg which is prone to ulceration (post-phlebotic syndrome). Heparin (p. 244) and warfarin (p. 246) are the two drugs used most frequently in the prevention and treatment of thromboembolism.

**Ximelagatran** This oral direct thrombin inhibitor is a potential alternative to warfarin and has already been evaluated in patients with venous thromboembolism, atrial fibrillation and myocardial infarction. It has a rapid onset of action and can be administered in a fixed dose without the need for monitoring. There are also fewer drug interactions than for warfarin but elimination

is primarily renal, and abnormalities of liver function have been described during its use.

## Prevention

About 25 000 people in the UK die from preventable, hospital-acquired venous thromboembolism every year. All patients should be assessed on admission to hospital for their risk of developing venous thromboembolism. Prophylactic measures include early mobilization, leg elevation and compression stockings. Thromboprophylaxis with low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) is indicated in medical inpatients (i.e. non-surgical) with any of the risk factors listed in Table 5.18. Recent long-distance, sedentary travel is an additional risk factor to consider in outpatients presenting with suspected venous thromboembolism. Prophylaxis of venous thromboembolism in surgical patients depends on the type of surgery and other risk factors (Table 5.18). Patients undergoing minor surgery (anaesthetic <60 min) with no risk factors for venous thrombosis are not usually given LMWH. Patients undergoing major surgery (anaesthetic >60 min) but without risk factors for venous thrombosis or patients undergoing minor surgery but with risk factors are at moderate risk and should receive LMWH (20 mg, p. 245). Patients undergoing major surgery and with risk factors are at high risk and should receive LMWH (40 mg).

## Treatment

Clinical features and investigation of deep venous thrombosis and pulmonary embolism are discussed on pages 487 and 475, respectively.

**Table 5.18** Risk factors for venous thromboembolism in hospital inpatients

|  |
|--|
| Age > 60 years   |
| One or more significant medical comorbidities e.g. heart disease, respiratory failure, acute infectious disease. |
| Obesity (body mass index > 30 kg/m <sup>2</sup> )  |
| Major abdominal/pelvic surgery   |
| Active cancer  |
| Pregnancy  |
| Use of oestrogen containing contraceptive/hormone replacement therapy  |
| Significant immobility   |
| Varicose veins with phlebitis  |
| Diabetic coma  |
| Personal history or first-degree relative with a history of venous thromboembolism                               |
| Thrombophilia (p. 229)   |
| Inflammatory bowel disease   |
| Nephrotic syndrome   |

### Treatment of established thromboembolism

- Obtain objective evidence of thrombosis as soon as possible; heparin treatment is often started on the basis of clinical suspicion.
- Perform a coagulation screen and platelet count before starting treatment to exclude a pre-existing thrombotic tendency.
- LMWH (p. 244). Where feasible selected patients can be safely treated as outpatients.
- Warfarin (p. 246) is started at the same time as heparin.
- The dose of warfarin is adjusted to maintain the INR, usually at two to three times the control value.
- Heparin is overlapped with warfarin for a *minimum* of 5 days and continued until the INR is in the therapeutic range (Table 5.19).
- Major side-effects of heparin therapy are bleeding and thrombocytopenia. The platelet count should be measured in all patients receiving heparin for more than 5 days.

Anticoagulation for 6 weeks is sufficient for patients after their first thrombosis with a precipitating cause, provided there are no persisting risk factors. Long-term anticoagulation is required for those with repeated episodes or continuing risk factors.

### Other anticoagulant drugs

These are new anticoagulants and not yet in widespread use.

- Fondaparinux – a synthetic pentasaccharide that inhibits factor X and is similar to the LMWHs.
- Hirudins are direct thrombin inhibitors. Bivalirudin is used in percutaneous coronary interventions and lepirudin is used for anticoagulation in patients with heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (p. 245).
- Dabigatran (direct thrombin inhibitor) and rivaroxaban (inhibitor of factor X) are both given orally and an option for the prophylaxis of venous thromboembolism after total hip or knee replacement surgery.

**Table 5.19** Indications for oral anticoagulation and target international normalized ratio (INR)

| Target INR |  |
|------------|--|
| 2.5        | Pulmonary embolism, deep vein thrombosis, symptomatic inherited thrombophilia, atrial fibrillation, cardioversion, mural thrombus, cardiomyopathy              |
| 3.5        | Recurrence of venous thromboembolism while on warfarin therapy, antiphospholipid syndrome, mechanical prosthetic heart valve, coronary artery graft thrombosis |

## THERAPEUTICS

### Oral iron

Reference nutrient intake is 8.7 mg for men, 14.8 mg for women.

#### Indications

Treatment of iron deficiency, prophylaxis in patients with risk factors for iron deficiency, e.g. malabsorption, menorrhagia, pregnancy and post-gastrectomy. Adding a 250 mg ascorbic acid tablet at the time of iron administration enhances the degree of iron absorption (iron is best absorbed as the ferrous ( $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ ) ion in a mildly acidic environment). Iron and folic acid combination preparations are used in pregnancy for women who are at risk of developing iron and folic acid deficiency.

#### Preparations and dose

**Ferrous sulphate** *Tablets: 200 mg (65 mg iron).*

Treatment: 1 tablet three times daily – continue for 3 months following normal haemoglobin result (the total duration of therapy should be for 6 months); prophylactic: 1 tablet daily.

**Ferrous gluconate** *Tablets 300 g (35 mg iron).*

Treatment: 2–6 tablets daily in divided doses.

#### Side-effects

Constipation and diarrhoea. Nausea and epigastric pain are related to the amount of elemental iron ingested and are lower with preparations containing a low elemental iron content, e.g. ferrous gluconate.

#### Cautions/contraindications

Avoid long-term use unless indicated; excretion of iron is fixed at 1–2 mg of iron per day through gastrointestinal loss, and prolonged use may result in iron overload.

### Folic acid

Reference nutrient intake is 200  $\mu\text{g}/\text{day}$ .

#### Indications

Folate-deficient megaloblastic anaemia, prevention of folic acid deficiency in chronic haemolytic states, renal dialysis and pregnancy, prevention of neural tube defects.

## Preparations and dose

**Folic acid** *Tablets: 400 µg, 5 mg; Syrup: 400 µg/mL, 2.5 mg/mL; Injection: 15 mg/mL.*

Folate deficiency: 5 mg daily for 4 months, maintenance 5 mg daily.

To prevent first neural tube defect: 400 µg daily before conception and during pregnancy.

To prevent recurrence of neural tube defect: 5 mg daily before conception and during pregnancy.

## Side-effects

Very rarely allergic reactions.

## Cautions/contraindications

Folic acid should not be used in undiagnosed megaloblastic anaemia unless vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is administered concurrently, otherwise neuropathy may be precipitated.

## Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>

Reference nutrient intake is 1.5 µg/day.

## Indications

Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency.

## Preparations and dose

**Hydroxocobalamin** *Injection: 1 mg/mL.*

Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency without neurological involvement: 1 mg intramuscularly three times a week for 2 weeks then 1 mg every 3 months lifelong.

Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency with neurological involvement: 1 mg intramuscularly daily for 6 days then 1 mg every 2 months.

**Cyanocobalamin** *Tablets: 50 µg; Liquid: 35 µg/5 mL.*

Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency of dietary origin: 50–150 µg or more daily taken between meals.

## Side-effects

Itching, fever, nausea, dizziness, anaphylaxis after injection. Hypokalaemia, sometimes fatal, is due to intracellular potassium shift on anaemia resolution after treatment of severe vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency.

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated if hypersensitivity to hydroxocobalamin or any component of preparation.

## Vitamin K

### Mechanism of action

Fat-soluble vitamin necessary for the production of blood clotting factors and proteins necessary for the normal calcification of bone; reference nutrient intake 1 µg/kg bodyweight.

### Indications

Water-soluble form used to prevent deficiency in patients with fat malabsorption (especially biliary obstruction or hepatic disease); intravenous form for excessive anticoagulation with warfarin and in patients with prolonged INR (due to fat malabsorption) prior to invasive procedures (e.g. endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) or liver biopsy) or in whom there is bleeding.

### Preparations and dose

**Phytomenadione** *Vitamin K<sub>1</sub>*, tablets: 10 mg; Injection: 10 mg/mL.

**Oral** Excessive anticoagulation (INR >8.0): 0.5–2.5 mg.

**IV** Excessive anticoagulation and major bleeding (any INR value): 5 mg over 10 minutes together with prothrombin complex concentrate or FFP (15 mL/kg).

**Menadiol sodium phosphate** *Water-soluble tablets: 10 mg.* For prevention of vitamin K deficiency in patients with fat malabsorption: 10 mg daily.

### Side-effects

Anaphylaxis with i.v. preparation.

### Cautions/contraindications

Caution with menadiol in G6PD deficiency and vitamin E deficiency (risk of haemolysis).

## Drugs affecting haemostasis

### Antiplatelet agents

- Aspirin, dipyridamole
- Clopidogrel
- Glycoprotein GP11b/111a inhibitor.



## Mechanism of action

Decrease platelet aggregation and inhibit thrombus formation in the arterial circulation, where anticoagulants have little effect. Aspirin irreversibly inhibits the enzyme cyclo-oxygenase, reducing production of thromboxane A<sub>2</sub>, a stimulator of platelet aggregation. Dipyridamole inhibits phosphodiesterase-mediated breakdown of cyclic AMP, which leads to impaired platelet activation by multiple mechanisms. Clopidogrel is a pro-drug that is metabolized by the liver, partly by cytochrome P450 2C19, before it is biologically active. It blocks binding of ADP to platelet receptors and thus inhibits activation of the GpIIb/IIIa complex and platelet activation. Glycoprotein GpIIb/IIIa inhibitors (e.g. abciximab, eptifibatide, tirofiban) prevent platelet aggregation by blocking the binding of fibrinogen to receptors on platelets. They are used as an adjunct to percutaneous coronary intervention in selected patients with acute coronary syndromes.

## Preparations and dose

**Aspirin** *Tablets: 75 mg, 300 mg, also as a dispersible form.*

Secondary prevention of thrombotic cerebrovascular or cardiovascular disease: 300 mg chewed followed by maintenance dose of 75 mg daily.

Primary prevention when estimated 10-year cardiovascular risk is  $\geq 20\%$  (p. 446), provided that blood pressure is controlled.

After coronary artery bypass grafting: 75 mg daily.

In combination with clopidogrel – see below.

Atrial fibrillation (selected cases, p. 429): 75 mg daily.

Transient musculoskeletal pain and pyrexia (see Chapter 7).

**Dipyridamole** *Tablets: 25 mg, 100 mg; Oral suspension: 50 mg/mL; modified release capsules: 200 mg.*

Secondary prevention of ischaemic stroke and transient ischaemic attacks: 300–600 mg daily in three to four divided doses before food. MR preparation, 200 mg twice daily.

**Clopidogrel** *Tablets: 75 mg, 300 mg.*

Where aspirin is contraindicated for the prevention of atherosclerotic events in patients with history of ischaemic stroke, myocardial infarction, or established peripheral artery disease: 75 mg daily.

Following coronary artery stent insertion: 300 mg daily, then 75 mg daily with aspirin 75 mg daily. Continue clopidogrel for 6 weeks; 12 months if a drug-eluting stent. Continue aspirin indefinitely.

Acute coronary syndrome: 300 mg, then 75 mg daily in addition to aspirin and other treatments. Continue clopidogrel for 12 months.

## Side-effects

An increased risk of bleeding is the main risk with all antiplatelet agents. Aspirin causes peptic ulceration. Patients with a past history of ulceration must be co-prescribed a proton pump inhibitor (PPI) with aspirin, to prevent recurrent ulceration. In patients with a history of peptic ulcer bleeding while taking aspirin, co-administration of a PPI is associated with a reduced rate of rebleeding compared with administration of clopidogrel alone.

The effects of aspirin and clopidogrel lasts for the duration of the platelet life i.e. 7–10 days. For surgical interventions: stop aspirin if indicated for primary prevention and continue if indicated for secondary prevention. Clopidogrel is likely to have been given for a high-risk indication e.g. to prevent coronary stent thrombosis and should not be stopped perioperatively without prior discussion with the cardiology team. However, the risk of bleeding perioperatively is high if clopidogrel is continued and non-urgent surgery should be delayed until such time that clopidogrel can be stopped. For urgent surgery, excessive and uncontrolled bleeding is treated with platelet transfusion.

## Cautions/contraindications

Active bleeding, haemophilia and other bleeding disorders are contraindications. Aspirin also causes bronchospasm and must be prescribed with caution to patients with asthma. Aspirin interacts with a number of other drugs, and its interaction with warfarin is a special hazard (refer to *National Formulary* for details). Drugs that inhibit CYP2C19 (fluoxetine, moclobemide, voriconazole, fluconazole, ticlopidine, ciprofloxacin, cimetidine, carbamazepine, oxcabazepine and chloramphenicol) reduce the efficacy of clopidogrel and should be avoided.

## Thrombin inhibitors

- Heparin
- Fondaparinux
- Bivalirudin.

## Mechanism of action

Heparin binds to and activates antithrombin (AT), which inactivates thrombin and other proteases involved in blood clotting, particularly factor Xa. Fondaparinux binds to AT and inhibits only factor Xa. Bivalirudin is a direct thrombin inhibitor. Heparin is the most widely used, usually the low molecular weight form.

## Indications

Heparin is used in the prevention and treatment of deep venous thrombosis and pulmonary embolism, myocardial infarction, acute coronary syndromes.

LMWH, produced by the enzymatic or chemical breakdown of the heparin molecule, is almost always used for these indications. For patients at high risk of bleeding, unfractionated heparin (which requires monitoring by measurement of APPT) is more suitable than LMWH because its effect can be terminated rapidly by stopping the infusion. Refer to national formulary for dosing for unfractionated heparin.

## Preparations and dose

**LMWH** *Enoxaparin* – Injection: 20 mg, 40 mg, 60 mg, 80 mg, 100 mg, 120 mg, 150 mg.

Prophylaxis of thromboembolism by subcutaneous injection:

*Surgical patients:* moderate risk 20 mg daily until the patient is fully mobile with first dose 2 hours before surgery; high risk 40 mg daily until the patient is fully mobile with first dose 12 hours before surgery. Extended treatment (after hospital discharge) for 4–6 weeks is recommended in high-risk patients after major cancer/gynaecological/orthopaedic surgery.

*Medical patients:* 40 mg daily.

In all patients reduce dose to 20 mg if body weight <50 kg or creatinine clearance is <30 mL/min.

Treatment of DVT and pulmonary embolism: 1.5 mg/kg (150 units/kg) by subcutaneous injection every 24 hours, usually for at least 5 days and until oral anticoagulation is established.

Unstable angina and NSTEMI: 1 mg/kg (100 units/kg) by subcutaneous injection every 12 hours usually for 2–8 days.

## Side-effects

- Haemorrhage.
- Thrombocytopenia, which is immune mediated and does not usually develop until after 6–10 days; it may be complicated by thrombosis. Platelet counts are recommended for patients receiving heparin for more than 5 days. Heparin should be stopped immediately and not repeated in those who develop thrombocytopenia or a 50% reduction of platelet count.
- Hyperkalaemia due to aldosterone secretion.
- Osteoporosis after prolonged use.

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated with active bleeding, acquired or inherited bleeding disorders, thrombocytopenia (platelets  $<75 \times 10^9/L$ ), recent cerebral haemorrhage, severe liver disease, severe untreated hypertension ( $>230/120$  mmHg), recent surgery to eye or nervous system, history of heparin-induced

thrombocytopenia, lumbar puncture/epidural within the past 4 hours or expected within the next 12 hours, acute stroke (discuss with stroke consultant).

## Oral anticoagulants

### Mechanism of action

Inhibits vitamin K-dependent  $\gamma$ -carboxylation of coagulation factors II, VII, IX and X, thus leading to biologically inactive forms. Monitoring is by measurement of the INR.

### Indications

Prophylaxis of embolization in atrial fibrillation, cardioversion and dilated cardiomyopathy (target INR 2.5); prophylaxis of embolization after insertion of mechanical prosthetic aortic (target INR 3.0) or mitral valve (target INR 3.5); prophylaxis and treatment of venous thrombosis and pulmonary embolism (target INR 2.5). Warfarin takes at least 48–72 hours for the anticoagulant effect to develop fully. All patients starting warfarin should be given an anticoagulant treatment booklet (advice on treatment, recording of INR and dosing) and advised to avoid cranberry juice (increases INR).

### Preparations and dose

**Warfarin** *Tablets: 1 mg, 3 mg, 5 mg.*

For rapid anticoagulation in venous thromboembolism, starting dose is 10 mg on days 1 and 2 with subsequent doses adjusted according to the INR. A lower dose (5 mg) is used in patients >60 years, body weight <50 kg, baseline INR >1.4 or patients taking interacting drugs which inhibit the metabolism of warfarin. Slow induction of warfarin (1 mg daily for a week) is used for patients in atrial fibrillation with subsequent dosing dependent on the INR.

Maintenance dose – usually 3–9 mg daily by mouth taken at the same time each day. Daily monitoring of the INR in the early days of treatment, then at longer intervals depending on response.

### Side-effects

Skin necrosis in patients with protein C or protein S deficiency, occurs soon after starting treatment.

Haemorrhage; management is based on the INR and whether there is major or minor bleeding:

- Major bleeding (intracranial, intraperitoneal, intraocular, muscular compartment syndrome, or life-threatening from any orifice); stop warfarin, give vitamin phytomenadione (vitamin K<sub>1</sub>) 5 mg by slow intravenous injection, and prothrombin complex concentrate 30–50 units/kg or FFP (15 mL/kg).

- INR >8, no bleeding or minor bleeding, stop warfarin. Give vitamin K, 500 µg by slow intravenous injection or 5 mg by mouth if there are risk factors for bleeding.
- Any other INR >target range stop warfarin and restart when INR <5.

## Contraindications

- Underlying abnormalities of haemostasis (e.g. haemophilia, thrombocytopenia).
- Hypersensitivity to warfarin or any of the excipients.
- After an ischaemic stroke for 2–14 days depending on the size of infarct and blood pressure.
- Surgery – stop warfarin 3 days prior to surgery if there is a risk of severe bleeding. In most instances warfarin can be restarted post-operatively as soon as the patient starts oral intake. Warfarin does not need to be stopped before tooth extraction provided INR <3.
- Severe uncontrolled hypertension.
- Active peptic ulceration.
- Severe liver disease.
- Pregnancy – teratogenic in first trimester and risk of placental or fetal haemorrhage in third trimester. Warfarin can be used during breast-feeding.

**Drug interactions** Many drugs interact with warfarin (check national formulary for full list) and the patient's INR should be measured frequently whenever any drug is added to, or withdrawn from, the patient's therapeutic regimen. Warfarin activity is particularly *increased* by alcohol, allopurinol, amiodarone, aspirin and other NSAIDs, omeprazole, ciprofloxacin, clofibrate, co-trimoxazole, dipyridamole, macrolide antibiotics such as erythromycin, metronidazole, statins, tamoxifen, levothyroxine. Warfarin activity is particularly *decreased* by carbamazepine, rifampicin, rifabutin, griseofulvin, and some herbal remedies, e.g. St John's wort. Warfarin activity may be *increased* or *decreased* by phenytoin, corticosteroids, colestyramine. Other drugs co-administered with warfarin increase the risk of bleeding and should be avoided – antiplatelet drugs (p. 242), NSAIDs and the antidepressant drugs serotonin selective reuptake inhibitors.

## Fibrinolytic drugs

### Mechanism of action

Hydrolyse a peptide bond in plasminogen to yield the active enzyme, plasmin, which promotes clot lysis.

## Indications

- Acute myocardial infarction within 12 hours of symptom onset.
- Selected cases of venous thromboembolism.
- Acute ischaemic stroke within 4.5 hours of symptom onset.

## Preparations and dose

**Alteplase** *Injection: 10 mg (5.8 million units), 20 mg (11.6 million units) and 50 mg (29 million units)/vial.*

Acute myocardial infarction within 12 hours of symptom onset: 15 mg by i.v. injection, followed by i.v. infusion of 50 mg (in patients <65 kg, 0.75 mg/kg) over 30 minutes, then 35 mg (<65 kg, 0.5 mg/kg) over 60 minutes. For acute myocardial infarction 6–12 hours within symptom onset 10 mg by i.v. injection, followed by i.v. infusion of 50 mg over 60 minutes, then 4 infusions each of 10 mg over 30 minutes; maximum total dose 1.5 mg/kg in patients <65 kg.

Massive pulmonary embolism with hypotension: 10 mg by i.v. injection over 1–2 minutes, followed by i.v. infusion of 90 mg over 2 hours; max 1.5 mg/kg in patients <65 kg.

Acute ischaemic stroke, 900  $\mu$ /kg (max 90 mg) over 60 minutes by i.v. infusion; initial 10% given by i.v. injection. Start as soon as possible ("time is brain") and given up to 4.5 hours after symptom onset.

**Streptokinase** *Injection: 1.5 million international units.*

Myocardial infarction: 1.5 million units over 60 minutes.

In selected cases of DVT, pulmonary embolism, acute arterial thromboembolism, central retinal venous or arterial thrombosis: by i.v. infusion 250 000 units over 30 minutes, then according to clinical condition.

## Side-effects

The main disadvantage is the indiscriminate activation of plasminogen both in clots and in the circulation, leading to an increased risk of haemorrhage. Other side-effects are cardiac arrhythmias during reperfusion of the myocardium, hypotension and allergic reactions (bronchospasm, urticaria) with streptokinase.

## Contraindications

Gastrointestinal or genitourinary bleeding (within the previous 21 days), aortic dissection, severe uncontrolled hypertension (systolic blood pressure

>180 mmHg, diastolic blood pressure >110 mmHg), intracranial aneurysm, recent major trauma/surgery/head injury (within the previous 14 days) or invasive diagnostic procedure (within last 7–10 days), recent stroke (other than acutely in ischaemic stroke), bleeding disorders, pregnancy or recent obstetric delivery, INR >1.7 if on warfarin.

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# Malignant disease

Malignant disease is common and is the second most common cause of death after cardiovascular disease. Most tumours arise from genetic mutations within a single population of precursor stem cells and over subsequent cell divisions there is an accumulation of further abnormalities. The genes most commonly affected are those that control cell cycle check points, DNA repair and DNA damage recognition, apoptosis, differentiation and growth signalling. Gene mutations may be:

- Germline – e.g. mutations in *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* account for most cases of familial breast cancer. The protein product of these mutated genes is unable to bind to the DNA repair enzyme Rad51 to make it functional in repairing DNA breaks.
- Somatic – in response to environmental carcinogens, e.g. smoking.

## DIAGNOSIS OF MALIGNANCY

The diagnosis of malignancy is made by:

- *Screening* in an asymptomatic person with the aim of detecting cancer at an earlier stage than symptomatic presentation and hopefully a better outcome. This is by population screening or individual screening of at-risk individuals. In the UK, population screening programmes are established for breast, cervical and colon cancer. Individual screening programmes are established for persons with a higher than average risk, usually because of family history, e.g. colonoscopy in persons with a family history of colon cancer at a young age.
- *Surveillance* in a patient with a disease that places them at higher risk of developing malignancy, e.g. liver ultrasound and measurement of serum  $\alpha$ -fetoprotein in a patient with cirrhosis with the aim of detecting hepatocellular carcinoma at an earlier stage than symptomatic presentation.
- *Investigation* in a symptomatic patient. Symptoms are the result of:
  - The primary tumour
  - Metastases

**Table 6.1** Serum tumour markers

|  |   |
|--|---|
| $\alpha$ -fetoprotein                                  | Hepatocellular carcinoma and non-seminomatous germ cell tumour of the gonads                          |
| $\beta$ -human chorionic gonadotrophin ( $\beta$ -hCG) | Choriocarcinomas, germ cell tumours (testicular) and lung cancer                                      |
| Prostate-specific antigen (PSA)                        | Prostate cancer   |
| Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA)                         | Colorectal cancer. May also be raised in other gastrointestinal malignancies                          |
| CA-125   | Ovarian cancer. May also be raised in breast, cervical, endometrial and gastrointestinal malignancies |
| CA19-9   | Upper gastrointestinal malignancies   |
| CA15-3   | Breast cancer   |
| Osteopontin  | Many cancers including mesothelioma   |

- Paraneoplastic symptoms. These are a consequence of the cancer but are not due to the local presence of the cancer and may be mediated by hormones or cytokines secreted by the cancer (e.g. ectopic adrenocorticotrophic hormone [ACTH] secretion in small cell lung cancer) or an immune response directed against the cancer e.g. dermatomyositis
- Non-specific effects such as weight loss, tiredness and lethargy.

## Investigations

- *To confirm the presence of malignancy in a patient with suspicious symptoms or signs.* This is by radiological imaging (with the specific test depending on the site) and biopsy of a suspicious lesion (e.g. at endoscopy) with histological examination and tissue tumour markers. Serum tumour markers (Table 6.1) are intracellular proteins or cell surface glycoproteins released into the circulation and may be present in higher than usual concentration in patients with cancer. In many cases they are requested inappropriately as most tumour markers are neither sensitive nor specific for a particular malignancy and can also be raised in benign conditions. They are mainly used in monitoring response to treatment.
- *To stage the cancer once diagnosed.* Staging the cancer will divide the patients into groups of different prognosis which can guide treatment selection. The staging systems vary according to tumour type and may be site specific (see Hodgkin's lymphoma) or the TNM (tumour, node, metastasis) classification which can be adapted for application to most common cancers.

- *To assess a patient's suitability for treatment*, e.g. full cardiac and respiratory work-up before liver transplantation for hepatocellular carcinoma.

## Cancer treatment

The management of patients with cancer must be coordinated by a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) which includes, depending on tumour type, a surgeon, oncologist, radiologist, histopathologist, physician, specialist nurse and sometimes other healthcare workers, e.g. dietician. Discussion with the patient about the treatment plan at each step will allow them to make a fully informed choice about their management.

In some solid tumours, treatment (chemotherapy, radiotherapy or hormone) is given after the primary treatment, e.g. surgical resection, where dissemination is undetectable but patients are at risk of micrometastases. This is called *adjuvant therapy*. *Neoadjuvant therapy* is given before the primary treatment to shrink the tumour to improve the efficacy of the local excision and to treat micrometastases as soon as possible. If effective, these treatments should lead to an increased chance of cure or overall disease-free survival.

## Chemotherapy

There are many chemotherapy drugs in common use. These drugs directly damage DNA and/or RNA and kill cells by promoting apoptosis and sometimes cell necrosis. They therefore affect not only tumour cells, but also the rapidly dividing normal cells of the bone marrow, gastrointestinal tract and germinal epithelium.

Side-effects include bone marrow suppression (leading to anaemia, thrombocytopenia and neutropenia [p. 205]), mucositis (causing mouth ulceration), loss of hair (alopecia) and sterility (which can be irreversible). To minimize these side-effects, chemotherapy is given at intervals to allow some recovery of normal cell function between cycles. Nausea and vomiting may be severe with some drugs, such as cisplatin, and are related to the direct actions of cytotoxic agents on the brainstem chemoreceptor trigger zone. Antiemetics such as metoclopramide (p. 136) and domperidone (p. 136) are used initially, but the serotonin 5-HT<sub>3</sub> antagonists (ondansetron and granisetron) combined with dexamethasone are used for severe vomiting. Chemotherapy drugs may themselves cause cancer, particularly acute leukaemia presenting years after treatment. There are additional side-effects that are specific to one class of drug, e.g. cardiotoxicity with the anthracyclines such as doxorubicin and neurotoxicity and nephrotoxicity with cisplatin.

## Radiotherapy

Radiation induces strand breaks in DNA and apoptosis. The complications of radiotherapy depend on the radiosensitivity of normal tissue in the path of

the radiation field. There may be damage to the skin (erythema and desquamation), gut (nausea, mucosal ulceration and diarrhoea), testes (sterility) and bone marrow (anaemia, leucopenia). General side-effects are lethargy and loss of energy.

## Endocrine therapy

This is used in the treatment of breast and prostate cancer to block the effects of oestrogens and androgens which may act as growth factors. Tamoxifen is a mixed agonist and antagonist of oestrogen on the oestrogen receptor and is used as an adjuvant therapy in breast cancer and in advanced metastatic breast disease. Aromatase inhibitors, e.g. anastrozole, letrozole and exemestane, block the conversion of androgens (synthesized by the adrenal glands) to estrone in the subcutaneous fat of post-menopausal women. They have greater efficacy than tamoxifen in the treatment of metastatic breast cancer and equal efficacy in the adjuvant setting. Gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) agonists, e.g. goserelin, which lower levels of circulating androgens and androgen receptor blockers, e.g. flutamide, are both used in the treatment of prostate cancer.

## Biological therapy

This group includes a range of protein molecules, from small peptide chemokines and larger cytokines to complex antibody molecules, made available by genetic engineering.

- Interferons such as interferon alfa have many actions in treatment of malignant disease, with both antiproliferative activity and stimulation of humoral and cell-mediated immune responses to the tumour.
- Interleukins have widespread activity in coordinating cellular activity in many organs. Interleukin 2 is used in renal cell carcinoma and melanoma.
- Tyrosine kinase inhibitors (imatinib, sunitinib, sorafenib) have diverse effects on cell growth, differentiation and metabolism.
- Anti-growth factor agents e.g. bevacizumab (antivascular endothelial growth factor receptor) and cetuximab (antiepidermal growth factor receptor) are added to chemotherapy to improve response.
- Anti-CD20 (rituximab) inhibits CD20 on B cells, which normally plays a role in the development and differentiation of B cells into plasma cells. Anti-CD52 (alemtuzumab) inhibits CD52 expressed on T and B lymphocytes and monocytes.
- Haemopoietic growth factors such as erythropoietin and granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF) are used to treat anaemia or to reduce the duration of neutropenia following chemotherapy.

## MYELOABLATIVE THERAPY AND HAEMOPOIETIC STEM CELL TRANSPLANTATION

Myeloablative therapy is the term used for treatment that employs high-dose chemotherapy or chemotherapy plus radiation, with the aim of clearing the bone marrow completely of both benign and malignant cells. Without bone marrow replacement or 'transplantation', the patient would die of bone marrow failure. Approaches to restore bone marrow function include the following:

- *Allogeneic* bone marrow transplantation (BMT): Bone marrow or peripheral blood stem cells *from another individual*, usually a human leucocyte antigen (HLA)-identical sibling, are infused intravenously following myeloablative therapy. Immunosuppression is required to prevent host rejection and graft-versus-host disease (GVHD). The latter is a syndrome in which donor T lymphocytes infiltrate the skin, gut and liver, causing a maculopapular rash, diarrhoea and liver necrosis. This occurs in 30–50% of transplant recipients and is potentially fatal in some cases. Following allogeneic BMT the blood count usually recovers within 3–4 weeks. The mortality rate is 20–40%, depending on the person's age, and is often a result of infection or GVHD.
- *Autologous* (the patient acts as his or her own source) stem cells: These are collected from bone marrow or peripheral blood before myeloablative chemotherapy and stored and reinfused afterwards. The main advantage is the short time for blood count recovery because peripheral blood progenitor cells are more differentiated. This technique has been particularly effective in relapsed leukaemias, lymphomas, myeloma and germ cell tumours.
- *Syngeneic*: Donor cells are taken from an identical twin.
- *From umbilical cord blood*: This is increasingly being used for adult and childhood leukaemia.

## Oncological emergencies

These arise as a result of the tumour itself or as a complication of treatment.

**Superior vena cava syndrome** can arise from any upper mediastinal mass but is most commonly associated with lung cancer and lymphoma. Presentation is with difficulty breathing and/or swallowing, oedematous facies and arms, and venous congestion in the neck with dilated veins in the upper chest and arms. Treatment is with immediate steroids, vascular stents, radiotherapy and chemotherapy for sensitive tumours.

**Acute tumour lysis syndrome** occurs as a result of treatment producing massive and rapid breakdown of tumour cells, leading to increased serum

level of urate, potassium and phosphate but with hypocalcaemia. It is most commonly seen as a complication of treatment of acute leukaemia and high-grade lymphoma unless preventive measures are taken. Hyperuricaemia and hyperphosphataemia result in acute kidney injury through urate and calcium phosphate deposition in the renal tubules. Prevention and treatment is with allopurinol (p. 295), rasburicase (urate oxidase) and high fluid loads e.g. 4–5 litres daily by intravenous infusion prior to, and continuing during chemotherapy.

Spinal cord compression (p. 779), neutropenic sepsis (p. 205), hypercalcaemia (p. 651) and raised intracranial pressure (p. 715) are discussed elsewhere.

## The leukaemias

The leukaemias are malignant neoplasms of the haemopoietic stem cells, characterized by diffuse replacement of the bone marrow by neoplastic cells. In most cases, the leukaemic cells spill over into the blood, where they may be seen in large numbers. The cells may also infiltrate the liver, spleen, lymph nodes and other tissues throughout the body. They are relatively rare diseases with an overall incidence of 10 per 100 000 per year.

**General classification** The characteristics of leukaemic cells can be assessed by light microscopy, expression of cytosolic enzymes and expression of surface antigens. These will reflect the lineage and degree of maturity of the leukaemic clone. Thus, leukaemia can be divided on the basis of the speed of evolution of the disease into acute or chronic. Each of these is then further subdivided into myeloid or lymphoid, according to the cell type involved:

- Acute myeloid leukaemia (AML)
- Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL)
- Chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML)
- Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL).

## Aetiology

In most cases the aetiology is unknown though several factors are associated.

**Genetic factors** Genetic factors are suggested by the increased incidence in patients with chromosomal disorders (e.g. Down's syndrome) and in identical twins of affected patients. Chromosomal abnormalities have been described in patients with leukaemia. The earliest described was the Philadelphia (Ph) chromosome, found in 95% of cases with CML and some patients with ALL. In the Ph chromosome the long arm of chromosome 22 is shortened by reciprocal translocation to the long arm of chromosome 9 (t(9;22)). The protein product of the resulting 'fusion' gene, *BCR-ABL*, has tyrosine kinase activity, and enhanced phosphorylating activity compared with the normal protein, resulting in altered cell growth, stromal attachment and apoptosis.

The leukaemic cells of most patients with acute promyelocytic leukaemia (APML) have the translocation  $t(15;17)$  involving the retinoic acid receptor alpha (*RAR $\alpha$* ) on chromosome 17 and the promyelocytic leukaemia gene (*PML*) on chromosome 15. The resulting PML-RAR $\alpha$  fusion protein shows reduced sensitivity to retinoic acid and prevents differentiation of myeloid cells.

### Environmental factors

- Chemicals, e.g. benzene compounds used in industry.
- Drugs, e.g. AML occurs after treatment with alkylating agents e.g. melphalan.
- Radiation exposure can induce genetic damage to haemopoietic precursors and increased incidences of leukaemia have been seen in survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and in patients treated with ionizing radiation.

## Acute leukaemia

The acute leukaemias are characterized by a clonal proliferation of myeloid or lymphoid precursors with reduced capacity to differentiate into more mature cellular elements. There is accumulation of leukaemic cells in the bone marrow, peripheral blood and other tissues with a reduction in red cells, platelets and neutrophils.

### Epidemiology

Both types of acute leukaemia can occur in all age groups, but ALL is predominantly a disease of childhood, whereas AML is seen most frequently in older adults (middle-aged and elderly).

### Clinical features

These are the result of marrow failure: anaemia, bleeding and infection, e.g. sore throat and pneumonia. Sometimes there is peripheral lymphadenopathy and hepatosplenomegaly.

### Investigations

A definitive diagnosis is made on the peripheral blood film and a bone marrow aspirate. The various subtypes (Table 6.2) are classified on the basis of morphology and immunophenotyping, and cytogenetic studies of blast cells. Auer rods (a rod-like conglomeration of granules in the cytoplasm) within blast cells are pathognomonic of AML. If the patient has a fever, blood cultures and chest radiograph are essential.

- Blood count shows anaemia and thrombocytopenia. The white cell count is usually raised, but may be normal or low.
- Blood film shows characteristic leukaemic blast cells.

**Table 6.2** World Health Organization classification of acute leukaemia**a. AML (acute myeloid leukaemia)**

1. AML with recurrent cytogenetic abnormalities (including acute promyelocytic leukaemia with t(15;17) or variants)
2. AML with multilineage dysplasia (often secondary to a pre-existing MDS)
3. AML and MDS, therapy-related, occurring after chemotherapy or radiotherapy
4. AML – not otherwise categorized

**b. ALL (acute lymphoblastic leukaemia)**

1. Precursor B cell acute lymphoblastic leukaemia
2. Burkitt cell leukaemia
3. Precursor T cell acute lymphoblastic leukaemia

*MDS, myelodysplastic syndromes.*

- Bone marrow aspirate usually shows increased cellularity, with a high percentage of abnormal lymphoid or myeloid blast cells.
- Lumbar puncture and cerebrospinal fluid examination are performed after blasts have been cleared from peripheral blood in all patients with ALL and AML with monoblast/monocytic component as the risk of central nervous system (CNS) involvement is high.

## Management

The initial requirement of therapy is to return the peripheral blood and bone marrow to normal (complete remission) with 'induction chemotherapy' tailored to the particular leukaemia and the individual patient's risk factors. The risk of failure of treatment is based on the cytogenetic pattern. Successful remission induction is always followed by further treatment (consolidation), the details being determined by the type of leukaemia and the patient's risk factors (and the patient's tolerance of treatment). Recurrence is almost invariable if 'consolidation' therapy is not given.

**Supportive care** Before starting treatment the following need to be performed:

- Correction of anaemia and thrombocytopenia by administration of blood and platelets
- Treatment of infection with intravenous antibiotics
- Prevention of the acute tumour lysis syndrome (p. 256).

## Treatment

### Acute myeloid leukaemia

Treatment with curative intent is undertaken in the majority of adults below the age of 60 years, provided there is no significant comorbidity.



- **Low risk of treatment failure (based on the cytogenetic pattern)** A moderately intensive combination of intravenous chemotherapy, e.g. cytosine arabinoside (cytarabine) and daunorubicin is given at intervals to allow marrow recovery in between. This is followed by consolidation therapy with a minimum of four cycles of treatment given at 3–4-week intervals.
- **Intermediate risk** Consolidating chemotherapy to induce remission followed by sibling matched allogeneic bone marrow transplantation, despite its attendant risks.
- **High risk of treatment failure.** This is only curable with allogeneic transplantation but unfortunately ‘high risk’ is commoner with advancing age when the toxicity of this treatment increases greatly.

### Acute promyelocytic leukaemia

APML is specifically associated with disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC), which may worsen when treatment is started. Management of DIC is discussed on page 235. The empirical discovery that all-*trans*-retinoic acid (ATRA) causes differentiation of promyelocytes and rapid reversal of the bleeding tendency was a major breakthrough. It is now conventional to treat APML with ATRA combined with chemotherapy and to follow successful remission induction with maintenance ATRA. Remission induction therapy as in other forms of AML is also necessary for long-term survival.

**Prognosis** Complete remission will be achieved in about three-quarters of patients under the age of 60, failure being due to either resistant leukaemia or death due to infection or (rarely) bleeding. About 50% of those entering complete remission will be cured. (i.e. approximately 30% overall). The management of recurrence is undertaken on an individual basis, since the overall prognosis is very poor despite the fact that second remissions may be achieved. Long survival following recurrence is rarely achieved without allogeneic transplantation.

### Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia

The principles of treatment differs in detail from that for AML. Remission induction is undertaken with combination chemotherapy including vincristine, dexamethasone, asparaginase and daunorubicin. Details of consolidation will be determined by the anticipated risk of failure but is usually with intensive chemotherapy and then maintenance therapy for two years to reduce the risk of disease recurrence. ALL has a propensity to involve the CNS, so treatment also includes prophylactic intrathecal drugs, methotrexate or cytosine arabinoside (cytarabine). Cranial irradiation is used in those at very high risk or in those with symptoms.

The prognosis in children with ALL is excellent with almost all achieving complete remission and with 80% being alive and disease free at 5 years. The results in adults are not so good, the prognosis getting worse with

advancing years. Overall about 70–80% achieve complete remission with only about 30% being cured.

## Chronic myeloid leukaemia

### Clinical features

CML occurs most commonly in middle age and is characterized by the presence of the Philadelphia (Ph) chromosome. There is an insidious onset, with fever, weight loss, sweating and symptoms of anaemia. Massive splenomegaly is characteristic.

Untreated, this chronic phase lasts 3–4 years. This is usually followed by blast transformation, with the development of acute leukaemia (usually acute myeloid) and, commonly, rapid death. Less frequently, CML transforms into myelofibrosis, death ensuing from bone marrow failure.

### Investigations

- Blood count usually shows anaemia and a raised white cell count (often  $>100 \times 10^9/L$ ). The platelet count may be low, normal or raised.
- Bone marrow aspirate shows a hypercellular marrow with an increase in myeloid progenitors. The Ph chromosome and the *BCR-ABL* oncogene are shown by cytogenetics and reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR).

### Management

Imatinib, a tyrosine kinase inhibitor that specifically blocks the enzymatic action of the BCR-ABL fusion protein, is first-line treatment for the chronic phase. Imatinib produces a complete haematological response in over 95% of patients, and 70–80% of these have no detectable *BCR-ABL* transcripts in the blood. Event-free, and overall, survival appear to be better than for other treatments. Imatinib can be continued indefinitely.

In the acute phase (blast transformation) most patients have only a short-lived response to imatinib, and other chemotherapy as for acute leukaemia is used in the hope of achieving a second chronic phase.

## Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia

CLL is an incurable disease of older people, characterized by an uncontrolled proliferation and accumulation of mature B lymphocytes (although T cell CLL does also occur).

### Clinical features

CLL usually follows an indolent course. Early CLL is generally asymptomatic and isolated peripheral blood lymphocytosis is frequent. Symptoms are a

consequence of bone marrow failure: anaemia, infections and bleeding. An autoimmune haemolysis contributes to the anaemia. Some patients may be asymptomatic, the diagnosis being a chance finding on the basis of a blood count done for a different reason. There may be lymphadenopathy and, in advanced disease, hepatosplenomegaly.

## Investigations

- Blood count shows a raised white cell count with lymphocytosis ( $>5 \times 10^9/L$ ). There may be anaemia and thrombocytopenia.
- Blood film shows small lymphocytes of mature appearance with 'smear or smudge cells', an artefactual finding due to cell rupture while the film is being made.
- Bone marrow reflects peripheral blood usually heavily infiltrated with lymphocytes.
- Immunophenotyping is essential to exclude reactive lymphocytosis and other lymphoid neoplasms.
- Cytogenetics to characterize the specific mutation can be helpful in assessing prognosis.

## Management

The decision to treat depends on the stage of the disease and more recently on cytogenetic markers. Early-stage disease is treated expectantly whereas advanced-stage disease is always treated immediately. Other indications for treatment include anaemia, recurrent infections, splenic discomfort and progressive disease.

Oral chlorambucil, with or without prednisolone, reduces the blood count and decreases lymphadenopathy and splenomegaly, and successfully palliates the disease. The bone marrow rarely returns to normal.

The purine analogue fludarabine in combination with cyclophosphamide and/or rituximab (p. 254) has a greater impact on the bone marrow and can induce complete remission. Alemtuzumab (p. 254) is used in patients in whom there is disease progression after treatment with fludarabine.

## Prognosis

The median survival from diagnosis is very variable and correlates closely with disease stage at diagnosis and cytogenetic findings, e.g. patients with either 11q or 17p deletions (the sites of two tumour suppressor genes) are at high risk of not responding to initial treatment and rapid progression. In other patients there is near normal life expectancy.

## THE LYMPHOMAS

The lymphomas are neoplastic transformations of normal B or T cells which reside predominantly in lymphoid tissues. They are commoner than the

leukaemias and are increasing in incidence for reasons that are unclear. The disease is classified on the basis of histological appearance into Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL).

## Hodgkin's lymphoma

Hodgkin's lymphoma is primarily a disease of young adults. Previous infection with Epstein–Barr virus (EBV) is thought to play a role in pathogenesis in some patients.

### Clinical features

Painless lymph node enlargement (often cervical nodes) is the most common presentation. These lymph nodes have a rubbery consistency on examination. There may be hepatosplenomegaly. Systemic 'B' symptoms are fever, drenching night sweats and weight loss (>10% in previous 6 months). Other constitutional symptoms such as pruritus, fatigue, anorexia and alcohol-induced pain at the site of the enlarged lymph nodes also occur.

### Investigations

- Blood count may be normal or show a normochromic, normocytic anaemia.
- The erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) is usually raised and is an indicator of disease activity.
- Liver biochemistry may be abnormal, with or without liver involvement.
- Serum lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) if raised is an adverse prognostic marker.
- Chest X-ray may show mediastinal widening from enlarged nodes.
- Diagnosis is by lymph node biopsy and histological examination showing Reed–Sternberg cells (binucleate or multinucleate malignant B lymphocytes) in a background rich in benign small lymphocytes and histiocytes.
- Disease staging is by computed tomography (CT) scan, which may show intrathoracic, abdominal and pelvic nodes. Positron emission tomography (PET) (p. 828) is increasingly being used for staging, assessment of response and direction of treatment.

### Differential diagnosis

This includes any other cause of lymphadenopathy (Table 6.3). Persistently enlarged lymph nodes must always be excised for histological and microbiological examination for diagnostic purposes.

**Table 6.3** Differential diagnosis of lymphadenopathy

| Localized   | Generalized  |
|---|--|
| Local infection<br>Pyogenic infection, e.g. tonsillitis<br>Tuberculosis | Infection<br>Epstein–Barr virus<br>Cytomegalovirus<br><i>Toxoplasma</i> sp.<br>Tuberculosis<br>HIV infection |
| Lymphoma  | Lymphoma   |
| Secondary carcinoma   | Leukaemia  |
|   | Systemic disease<br>Systemic lupus erythematosus<br>Sarcoidosis<br>Rheumatoid arthritis                      |
|   | Drug reaction, e.g. phenytoin  |
| <i>HIV, human immunodeficiency virus.</i>                               |  |

## Management

Treatment is given with curative intent. The choice of treatment depends on:

- Stage (Table 6.4)
- Involved sites
- ‘Bulk’ of lymph nodes involved
- Presence of ‘B’ symptoms.
- ‘Early’ stage disease (Stage IA, IIA with no bulk) is treated with brief chemotherapy (ABVD, doxorubicin, bleomycin, vinblastine, dacarbazine) followed by involved field irradiation.
- *Advanced disease* (all other stages) are treated with cyclical combination chemotherapy (8 cycles of ABVD) with irradiation at sites of bulk disease. PET/CT is used to detect disease activity after treatment and to distinguish between active tumour (PET-positive) and necrosis or fibrosis (PET-negative) in residual masses. Irradiation, with its attendant complications, can be omitted in PET-negative masses after chemotherapy.

Prognosis is related to the stage of disease at presentation, with a 5-year survival rate of over 90% in stage I declining to 60% in stage IV. The presence of B symptoms indicates more severe disease with a worse prognosis.

## Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma

These are malignant tumours of the lymphoid system classified separately from Hodgkin’s lymphoma. Most (70%) are of B cell origin with 30% of T cell

**Table 6.4** Staging classification of Hodgkin's lymphoma

| Stage | Definition   |
|-------|--|
| I     | Involvement of a single lymph node region or a single extralymphatic organ or site   |
| II    | Involvement of two or more lymph node regions on the same side of the diaphragm, or localized involvement of an extralymphatic organ or site and of one or more lymph node regions on the same side of the diaphragm       |
| III1  | Involvement of lymph node regions on both sides of the diaphragm, which may also be accompanied by involvement of the spleen (IIIS) or by localized involvement of an extralymphatic organ (IIIE) or site or both (IIISE). |
| IV    | Diffuse or disseminated involvement of one or more extralymphatic organs or tissues, with or without associated lymph node involvement   |

*Each stage can also be graded A (no 'B' symptoms) or B (with 'B' symptoms), X (bulky disease) or E (involvement of a single extranodal site that is contiguous or proximal to the known nodal site).*

origin. There is a malignant clonal expansion of lymphocytes, which occurs at different stages of lymphocyte development. In general, neoplasms of non-dividing mature lymphocytes are indolent whereas those of proliferating cells (e.g. lymphoblasts, immunoblasts) are much more aggressive. The B and T/natural killer (NK) cell lymphomas are each further divided on this basis, e.g. precursor B cell lymphoma, and then again subdivided based on cytogenetics and immunophenotyping. The aetiology is unknown in most cases but some are associated with a specific infection, e.g. *Helicobacter pylori* and gastric mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue (MALT) lymphoma.

## Clinical features

Presentation is rare before the age of 40. Most patients present with painless peripheral lymph node enlargement. Systemic symptoms as in Hodgkin's lymphoma may occur. Extranodal involvement is more common than in Hodgkin's lymphoma and almost any organ in the body can be involved. Bone marrow infiltration leads to anaemia, recurrent infections and bleeding. Skin involvement with T cell lymphoma presents as mycosis fungoides and Sézary syndrome.

## Investigations

- Blood count may show anaemia. An elevated white cell count or thrombocytopenia suggests bone marrow involvement. The ESR may be raised.
- Liver biochemistry may be abnormal if the liver is involved.

- Serum lactate dehydrogenase and  $\beta_2$ -microglobulin are prognostic indicators.
- Chest X-ray, CT, PET and gallium scans are of help in staging.
- Bone marrow aspiration and trephine biopsy will confirm marrow involvement.
- Lymph node biopsy is required for definitive diagnosis and subtype classification.

## Management

Treatment depends on the lymphoma type and stage (similar to Hodgkin's lymphoma). *Diffuse large B cell lymphoma* is the commonest lymphoma and first-line treatment is with cyclical combination chemo-immunotherapy (CHOP + R, cyclophosphamide, hydroxydaunorubicin, vincristine, prednisolone and rituximab) with field irradiation for those with bulky disease. Between 60–70% of those with early-stage disease will achieve a cure with this regimen.

- *Primary gastric lymphoma* in many cases is associated with *H. pylori* infection. Treatment to eradicate the infection (p. 80) is usually all that is required provided there is no evidence of disease outside the stomach. This is followed by close endoscopic surveillance.
- *Burkitt's lymphoma* occurs mainly in African children, and is associated with EBV infection. Jaw tumours are common, usually with gastrointestinal involvement. Treatment is with cyclical combination chemotherapy.

## THE PARAPROTEINAEMIAS

### Multiple myeloma

Multiple myeloma is a malignant disease of the plasma cells of bone marrow, accounting for 1% of all malignant disease. There is clonal proliferation of bone marrow plasma cells usually capable of producing monoclonal immunoglobulins (paraproteins), which in most cases are IgG or IgA. The paraproteinaemia may be associated with excretion of light chains in the urine (Bence Jones protein) which are either kappa or lambda; sometimes there are light chains without a paraproteinaemia.

### Clinical features

The peak age of presentation is 60 years. There is:

- *Bone destruction* – increased osteoclastic activity causes bone pain (back ache is the most common presenting symptom), osteolytic lesions, pathological fractures, spinal cord compression and hypercalcaemia.
- *Bone marrow infiltration* with plasma cells resulting in anaemia, infections and bleeding.

- *Acute kidney injury* has multiple causes: deposition of light chains in the tubules, hypercalcaemia, hyperuricaemia and amyloid deposition in the kidneys.

Paraproteins may form aggregates in the blood, which greatly increase the viscosity, leading to blurred vision, gangrene and bleeding. Infections are also due to a reduction in the normal polyclonal immunoglobulin levels (immune paresis).

## Investigations

Two out of three diagnostic features should be present:

- Paraproteinaemia on serum protein immunofixation or Bence Jones protein in the urine.
- Radiological evidence (CT, MRI) of lytic bone lesions.
- An increase in bone marrow plasma cells on bone marrow aspirate or trephine biopsy.

Other essential investigations are as follows:

- Blood count, which may show anaemia, thrombocytopenia and leucopenia. The ESR is almost always high.
- Serum biochemistry may show evidence of renal failure and hypercalcaemia. The alkaline phosphatase is usually normal.
- Serum  $\beta_2$ -microglobulin and albumin are used in prognosis.

## Management

With good supportive care and chemotherapy with autologous stem cell transplantation, median survival is now 5 years with some patients surviving to 10 years. Young patients receiving more intensive therapy may live longer.

Supportive therapy includes correction of anaemia with blood transfusion or erythropoietin, prompt treatment of infections, and treatment of bone pain with radiotherapy or high-dose dexamethasone. Acute kidney injury (p. 383) and hypercalcaemia (p. 651) may be corrected by adequate hydration alone. Progression of bone disease is reduced by bisphosphonates e.g. zoledronate, which inhibit osteoclastic activity. Hyperviscosity is treated by plasmapheresis together with systemic therapy.

Specific treatment involves combination chemotherapy with melphalan (an alkylating agent), prednisolone and thalidomide. Younger patients (<65–70 years) are treated with high-dose melphalan with peripheral blood stem cell rescue. Lenalidomide, a thalidomide analogue, and bortezomib, a proteasome inhibitor, are currently used for relapsed myeloma.



## Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance

This is usually seen in older patients, where a raised level of paraprotein (usually IgA) is found in the blood, but without other features of myeloma. Patients are often asymptomatic and no treatment is required. Follow-up is necessary as 20–30% go on to develop multiple myeloma over a 25-year period.

## PALLIATIVE MEDICINE AND SYMPTOM CONTROL

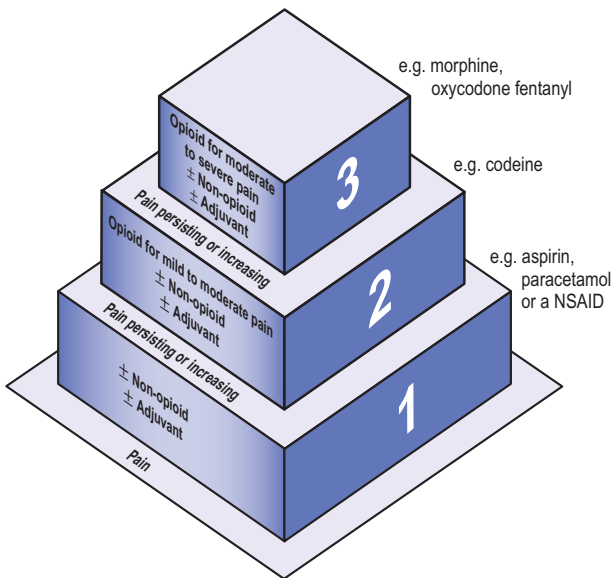
Palliative care describes the multidisciplinary approach to patients with advanced end-stage disease. Patients with advanced cancer and chronic non-malignant disease e.g. organ failure (heart, lung and kidney), neurological disease and HIV infection, all benefit from this approach, which aims to achieve the best possible quality of life. It includes management of symptoms, access to support services, involving patients and family in their care and helping them to make decisions about end of life care.

### Management of pain

The approach to successful management of pain includes an assessment of patient characteristics (mood, previous problems with analgesia, fear of opioids) and the likely aetiology of the pain. Pain can be controlled in most patients using a simple step-wise approach (the World Health Organization [WHO] analgesic ladder) that guides the choice of analgesia according to pain severity (Fig. 6.1). Morphine is the most commonly used strong opioid and where possible it should be given regularly by mouth.

- *Dose titration of morphine* is with a normal release formulation with a rapid onset and duration of action, e.g. 5–10 mg morphine elixir or tablets every 4 hours (depending on body weight, renal function and use of other weak opioids) with extra doses allowed for 'breakthrough pain' as often as necessary. The daily requirements can be assessed after 24 hours and the regular dose adjusted as necessary.
- *Maintenance of pain relief* is with a controlled release morphine preparation. When the stable dose requirement is established by titration the morphine can be changed to a controlled-release preparation e.g. 20 mg morphine elixir 4 hourly = 60 mg of a twice-daily preparation or 120 mg of a once-daily preparation. Side effects of morphine include nausea and vomiting (see below), constipation (lactulose and senna should be co-prescribed), confusion, drowsiness and nightmares.

As pain may be due to different physical aetiologies, an appropriate adjuvant analgesic may be needed in addition to, or instead of, traditional drug treatments:



**Fig. 6.1** The World Health Organization (WHO) three-step analgesic ladder is a framework for the prescription of analgesic drugs. The ladder attempts to meet the ceiling effect of analgesic drugs to the degree of pain present. If pain is severe or analgesia ineffective, then an ascent of the ladder is recommended. NSAID, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug.

- Adjuvant analgesics include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (pain, p. 317) and bisphosphonates (p. 319) used in addition to opioids, for bone pain.
- Tricyclic antidepressants (e.g. amitriptyline 10–75 mg daily) and anti-epileptics (e.g. gabapentin 600–2400 mg daily or pregabalin 150 mg increasing to 600 mg daily) for neuropathic pain
- Steroids e.g. dexamethasone (p. 665) for the headache of raised intracranial pressure or liver capsule pain.

## Palliation of nausea and vomiting

Nausea and vomiting are common symptoms and successful management involves identifying the likely cause and the nerve pathway activated by the trigger:

- Chemoreceptor trigger zone in the floor of the fourth ventricle where dopamine and serotonin type 3 (5-HT<sub>3</sub>) receptors are stimulated by drugs and metabolites

- Vomiting centre in the brainstem where histamine type 1, acetylcholine and 5-HT<sub>2</sub> receptors receive sensory input from higher centres, from visceral and serosal stretch receptors and from the VIIIth cranial nerve (p. 735)
- Afferents from stretch receptors on the liver capsule, peritoneum and bowel input to the vomiting centre.

Nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy or opioids is treated with haloperidol (1.5–3 mg daily) or metoclopramide (10–20 mg three times daily by mouth or subcutaneously, both of which block dopamine type 2 receptors. When the risk of nausea and vomiting is high, a specific 5-HT<sub>3</sub> antagonist (e.g. ondansetron 8 mg orally or by slow i.v. injection) is used. Vomiting due to gastric distension is treated with metoclopramide but vomiting due to complete bowel obstruction is best treated with physical measures to relieve the obstruction (e.g. stent insertion or defunctioning colostomy in large bowel obstruction) and an antispasmodic e.g. hyoscine hydrobromide, at the end of life.

## Care of the dying patient

The dying patient requires appropriate care in their last hours or days of life. The Liverpool Care Pathway for the Dying Patient (LCP) provides a framework for the delivery of appropriate care for dying patients and their relatives during the last 2–3 days of life. The aim is to ensure physical, psychological and spiritual comfort of patients and their relatives by a multiprofessional approach. The LCP provides guidance on the different aspects of care required, including comfort measures, anticipatory prescribing and discontinuation of unnecessary interventions such as withdrawal of blood for tests (the results of which would make no difference to patient care). A key element of the LCP is control of symptoms such as pain, agitation, nausea, vomiting, breathlessness and respiratory secretions.

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# Rheumatology

Musculoskeletal problems are common and usually short-lived and self-limiting. They account for about one in five consultations in primary care. Recognition and early treatment of rheumatic conditions help reduce the incidence of chronic pain disorders in non-inflammatory conditions and allow early referral for specialist care in inflammatory arthritis to achieve better symptom control and prevention of long-term joint damage. Pain, stiffness and swelling are the most common presenting symptoms of joint disease and may be localized to a single joint or affect many joints.

## THE NORMAL JOINT

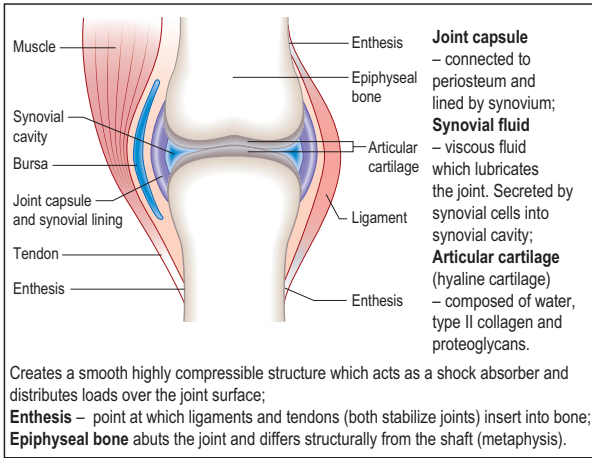
There are three types of joints – fibrous, fibrocartilaginous and synovial. Fibrous and fibrocartilaginous joints include the intervertebral discs, the sacroiliac joints, the pubic symphysis and the costochondral joints. Synovial joints include the ball-and-socket joints (e.g. the hip) and the hinge joints (e.g. interphalangeal). In synovial joints the opposed cartilaginous articular surfaces move painlessly over each other, stability is maintained during use and the load is distributed across the surface of the joint (Fig. 7.1).

## MUSCULOSKELETAL SYMPTOMS

*Arthralgia* describes joint pains when the joint appears normal on examination.

*Arthritis* is the term used when there is objective evidence of joint inflammation (swelling, deformity or an effusion).

In a patient presenting with joint pains, the history and examination must assess the distribution of joints affected (symmetrical?, axial or peripheral?), the presence of morning stiffness (>30 minutes in inflammatory arthropathies), aggravating and relieving factors, past medical history and family history. Table 7.1 lists the likely causes of joint pains based on the age and sex of the patient.



**Fig. 7.1** Anatomy and physiology of a normal synovial joint.

**Table 7.1** Differential diagnosis of polyarticular arthritis in adults in the UK

| Age        | Predominantly males                               | Predominantly females                |
|------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Young      | Reactive arthritis                                | Systemic lupus erythematosus         |
|            | Ankylosing spondylitis                            | Rheumatoid arthritis                 |
|            | Psoriatic arthropathy<br>Enteropathic arthropathy | Sjögren's syndrome                   |
| Middle age | Gout  | Osteoarthritis                       |
| Elderly    |   | Rheumatoid arthritis                 |
|            |   | Osteoarthritis                       |
|            |   | Polymyalgia rheumatica<br>Pseudogout |

**Any age:** Lyme disease, endocarditis, acute hepatitis B infection, human immunodeficiency virus infection, parvovirus.

**Uncommon arthropathies:** Malignancy (hypertrophic pulmonary osteoarthropathy), rheumatic fever, Henoch–Schönlein purpura, Behçet's syndrome.

Pain in or around a single joint may arise from the joint itself (articular problem) or from structures surrounding the joint (periarticular problem). Enthesitis (inflammation at the site of attachment of ligaments, tendons and joint capsules), bursitis and tendinitis are all causes of periarticular pain. Pain arising from the joint may be the result of a mechanical problem (e.g. torn meniscus) or an inflammatory problem.

The causes of a large-joint monoarthritis include osteoarthritis, gout, pseudogout, trauma, septic arthritis (p. 296). Disseminated gonococcal infection is a common cause of acute non-traumatic monoarthritis or oligoarthritis in young adults. Less common causes are rheumatoid arthritis (RA), the spondyloarthropathies, tuberculous infection and haemarthrosis (e.g. in haemophilia, or on warfarin). Acute monoarthritis requires urgent investigation and treatment (p. 298). The key investigation is synovial fluid aspiration with Gram stain and culture and analysis for crystals in gout and pseudogout.

## COMMON INVESTIGATIONS IN MUSCULOSKELETAL DISEASE

### Blood tests

**Simple blood tests** will usually show evidence of a non-specific acute-phase response with inflammatory arthritides and autoimmune rheumatic conditions. Normochromic, normocytic anaemia is common, though hypochromic, microcytic anaemia may be present indicating iron deficiency, often due to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID)-induced gastrointestinal bleeding. Erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) (p. 824) and C-reactive protein (CRP) (p. 822) are the most widely used indicators of the acute-phase response and are frequently used to monitor disease activity. A raised alkaline phosphatase may indicate bony disease (p. 140).

**Autoantibodies** Autoantibodies (see rheumatoid factor [p. 283] and Table 7.9 below) may be non-specific and found in normal individuals. At high titre (>1:160) their disease specificity increases and they help to establish a diagnosis in patients with clinical features suggestive of an autoimmune disease. They can sometimes be used to monitor disease activity and provide prognostic data, e.g. seropositive RA (i.e. cyclic citrullinated peptide antibodies [anti-CCP] or rheumatoid factor are present) is associated with more erosive joint disease and extra-articular manifestations than seronegative.

### Imaging

**Plain X-rays** may show fractures, deformity, soft tissue swelling, decreased bone density, osteolytic and osteosclerotic areas suggestive of metastases, joint erosions, joint space narrowing and new bone formation. X-rays may be normal in early inflammatory arthritis but are used as a baseline for later comparison.

**Bone scintigraphy (isotope bone scan)** uses a tracer ( $^{99}\text{Tc}$ -bisphosphonate), which, following intravenous injection, localizes to sites of increased bone turnover and blood circulation. ‘Hot spots’ are non-specific and occur in osteomyelitis, septic arthritis, following surgery or trauma, malignancy and Paget’s disease. It is best used in combination with other anatomical imaging techniques.

**Ultrasound** is useful for assessment of soft tissue and periarticular changes such as hip joint effusion, Baker’s cyst and inflamed/damaged tendons. It is sometimes used to assess bone density (at the heel) as a screening procedure prior to dual energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA).

**MRI** is particularly useful in the investigation of articular disease and spinal disorders. It is not indicated in patients with uncomplicated mechanical low back pain.

**DXA** (dual energy X-ray absorptiometry) measures bone mineral density (BMD) in the diagnosis and monitoring of osteoporosis (p. 311).

**Arthroscopy** is a direct means of visualizing the inside of a joint, particularly the knee or shoulder. Biopsies can be taken, surgery performed in certain conditions (e.g. repair or trimming of meniscal tears), and loose bodies removed.

## Synovial fluid analysis

A needle is inserted into a joint for three main reasons: aspiration of synovial fluid for diagnosis or to relieve pressure, and injection of corticosteroid or local anaesthetic. The most common indications for joint aspiration are evaluation for sepsis in a single inflamed joint (p. 298) and confirmation of gout and pseudogout by polarized light. Synovial fluid should be analysed for colour, viscosity, cell count, culture, glucose and protein.

## Investigation of suspected muscle disease

See page 738.

### COMMON REGIONAL MUSCULOSKELETAL PROBLEMS

Inflammatory arthritis or osteoarthritis causes pain in one or more joints. This section describes specific regional problems. The diagnosis of most of these conditions is usually clinical and initial treatment is with painkillers, e.g. paracetamol and NSAIDs. Physiotherapy and local steroid injections are used in some cases.

**Pain in the neck and shoulder** is often due to muscular spasm. There is unilateral or bilateral pain which may radiate upwards to the occiput and often is associated with tension headaches. Nerve root compression by cervical disc prolapse or spondylosis causes unilateral neck pain radiating to interscapular and shoulder regions (see below). It is



associated with pins and needles and neurological signs in the arms. Pain in the neck may also be caused by RA, ankylosing spondylitis or fibromyalgia (chronic widespread muscle pain often in young women with no underlying cause; large psychological overlay in some patients). Polymyalgia rheumatica (p. 307) causes pain and stiffness in the shoulder girdle.

Rotator cuff injury and inflammation is one of the most common causes of *shoulder pain*. The rotator cuff muscles (supraspinatus, infraspinatus, subscapularis, teres minor) are positioned around the shoulder joint and stabilize the joint and help with movement. The muscular tendons join to form the rotator cuff tendon which inserts into humerus. Rotator cuff tendinitis, impingement and tears cause shoulder pain with a painful arc (between 70 and 120°) on shoulder abduction in the former two and prevention of active abduction (in the first 90°) in the latter. Adhesive capsulitis ('frozen' shoulder) causes severe shoulder pain with all movements. Ultrasound examination is the best investigation to differentiate between these causes.

**Elbow pain** occurs due to inflammation of the insertion site of the wrist extensor tendon into the lateral epicondyle (tennis elbow) or wrist flexor tendon into the medial epicondyle (golfer's elbow). There is local tenderness and pain radiates into the forearm on using the affected muscles.

**Hip problems** Fracture of the femoral neck (pain in the hip, usually after a fall, leg shortened and externally rotated) or avascular necrosis of the femoral head (severe hip pain in a patient with risk factors, p. 314) will often be suspected from the history and examination. Pain over the trochanter which is worse going up stairs and when abducting the hip can be due to trochanteric bursitis or a tear of the gluteus medius tendon at its insertion into the trochanter. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) will differentiate the two. Meralgia paraesthetica (lateral cutaneous nerve of thigh compression) causes numbness and increased sensitivity to light touch over the antero-lateral thigh. It is usually self-limiting.

**The knee** is a frequent site of sports injuries leading to torn menisci and cruciate ligaments. These injuries may be associated with bleeding into the joint (haemarthrosis). The knee is also frequently involved in inflammatory arthritides, osteoarthritis and pseudogout. An associated effusion causes swelling, stiffness and pain with the 'bulge sign' and 'patellar tap' on examination. In a few patients with an effusion there is a connection to a bursa, forming a cyst (*Baker's cyst*) in the popliteal fossa. This may rupture (*ruptured popliteal or Baker's cyst*) and the escape of fluid into the soft tissue of the popliteal fossa and upper calf causes sudden and severe pain, swelling and tenderness. It may be confused with a deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and is diagnosed on ultrasonography. Treatment is with analgesics, rest with the leg elevated and aspiration and injection of corticosteroids into the knee joint.

## BACK PAIN

### Lumbar back pain

Lumbar back pain is a common symptom experienced by most people at some time in their lives. Only a few patients have a serious underlying disorder. Mechanical back pain is a common cause in young people. It starts suddenly, is often unilateral, and may be helped by rest. It may arise from the facet joints, spinal ligaments or muscle. The history, physical examination and simple investigations will also often identify the minority of patients with other causes of back pain (Table 7.2).

The age of the patient helps in deciding the aetiology of back pain because certain causes are more common in particular age groups. These are illustrated in Table 7.3.

**Table 7.2** Causes of lumbar back pain

| Causes                |   | History and examination  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <b>Mechanical</b>     | Lumbar disc prolapse<br>Osteoarthritis<br>Fractures<br>Spondylolisthesis<br>Spinal stenosis                               | Often sudden onset<br>Pain worse in the evening<br>Morning stiffness is absent<br>Exercise aggravates pain   |
| <b>Inflammatory</b>   | Ankylosing spondylitis<br>Infection (see below)   | Gradual onset<br>Pain worse in the morning<br>Morning stiffness is present<br>Exercise relieves pain   |
| <b>Serious causes</b> | Metastases<br>Multiple myeloma<br>Tuberculosis osteomyelitis<br>Bacterial osteomyelitis<br>Spinal and root canal stenosis | <i>Age &lt; 20 or &gt; 50 years</i><br><i>Constant pain without relief</i><br><i>History of TB, HIV, carcinoma, steroid use</i><br><i>Systemically unwell: fever, weight loss</i><br><i>Localized bone tenderness</i><br><i>Bilateral signs in the legs</i><br><i>Neurological deficit involving more than one root level</i><br><i>Bladder, bowel or sexual function deficits</i> |
| <b>Others</b>         | Osteomalacia, Paget's disease, referred pain from pelvic abdominal disease  |  |

*Text in red indicates the 'red flags' in a patient with lumbar back pain. Onset of thoracic pain is also a 'red flag'.*

**Table 7.3** Low back pain – disorders most commonly found in specific age groups

| 15–30 years                   | 30–50 years                   | 50 years and over               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Mechanical                    | Mechanical                    | Degenerative joint disease      |
| Prolapsed intervertebral disc | Prolapsed intervertebral disc | Osteoporosis<br>Paget's disease |
| Ankylosing spondylitis        | Degenerative joint disease    | Malignancy                      |
| Spondylolisthesis             | Malignancy                    | Myeloma                         |
|                               | Fractures (all ages)          |                                 |
|                               | Infective lesions (all ages)  |                                 |

## Investigations

A detailed history and physical examination (Table 7.2) will lead to the diagnosis in many cases. The key points are age, speed of onset, the presence of motor or sensory symptoms, involvement of the bladder or bowel, and the presence of stiffness and the effect of exercise. Young adults with a history suggestive of mechanical back pain and with no physical signs do not need further investigation.

- Full blood count, ESR and serum biochemistry (calcium, phosphate, alkaline phosphatase) are required only when the pain is likely to be due to malignancy, infection or a metabolic cause. Prostate-specific antigen should be measured if secondary prostatic disease is suspected.
- Spinal X-rays are only indicated if there are 'red flag' symptoms and signs (Table 7.3) which indicate a high risk of more serious underlying problems.
- Bone scans (p. 274) show increased uptake with infection or malignancy.
- MRI is useful when neurological symptoms and signs are present. It is useful for the detection of disc and cord lesions. Computed tomography (CT) scans demonstrate bone pathology better.

## Management

The treatment depends on the cause. Mechanical back pain is managed with analgesia, brief rest and physiotherapy. Patients should stay active within the limits of their pain. Exercise programmes reduce long-term problems.

### Intervertebral disc disease

#### Acute disc disease

Prolapse of the intervertebral disc results in acute back pain (lumbago), with or without radiation of the pain to areas supplied by the sciatic nerve

(sciatica). It is a disease of younger people (20–40 years) because the disc degenerates with age and in elderly people is no longer capable of prolapse. In older patients sciatica is more likely to be the result of compression of the nerve root by osteophytes in the lateral recess of the spinal canal.

## Clinical features

There is a sudden onset of severe back pain, often following a strenuous activity. The pain is often clearly related to position and is aggravated by movement. Muscle spasm leads to a sideways tilt when standing. The radiation of the pain and the clinical findings depend on the disc affected (Table 7.4), the lowest three discs being those most commonly affected.

## Investigations

Investigations are of very limited value in acute disc disease and X-rays are often normal. MRI is usually reserved for patients in whom surgery is being considered (see later).

## Management

Treatment is aimed at the relief of symptoms and has little effect on the duration of the disease. In the acute stage, treatment consists of bed rest on

**Table 7.4** Symptoms and signs of common root compression syndromes produced by lumbar disc prolapse

| Root lesion | Pain  | Sensory loss   | Motor weakness   | Reflex lost | Other signs                     |
|-------------|---|--|--|-------------|---------------------------------|
| S1          | From buttock down back of thigh and leg to ankle and foot | Sole of foot and posterior calf                      | Plantar flexion of ankle and toes                      | Ankle jerk  | Diminished straight leg raising |
| L5          | From buttock to lateral aspect of leg and dorsum of foot  | Dorsum of foot and anterolateral aspect of lower leg | Dorsiflexion of foot and toes                          | None        | As above                        |
| L4          | Lateral aspect of thigh to medial side of calf            | Medial aspect of calf and shin                       | Dorsiflexion and inversion of ankle; extension of knee | Knee jerk   | Positive femoral stretch test   |

a firm mattress, analgesia, and occasionally epidural corticosteroid injection in severe disease. Surgery is only considered for severe or increasing neurological impairment, e.g. foot drop or bladder symptoms. Physiotherapy is used in the recovery phase, helping to correct posture and restore movement.

### Chronic disc disease

Chronic lower back pain is associated with 'degenerative' changes in the lower lumbar discs and facet joints. Pain is usually of the mechanical type (see above). Sciatic radiation may occur with pain in the buttocks radiating into the posterior thigh. Usually the pain is long-standing and the prospects for cure are limited. However, measures that have been found useful include NSAIDs, physiotherapy and weight reduction. Surgery can be considered when pain arises from a single identifiable level and has failed to respond to conservative measures, and fusion at this level, with decompression of the affected nerve roots, can be successful.

## Mechanical problems

### Spondylolisthesis

Spondylolisthesis is characterized by a slipping forward of one vertebra on another, most commonly at L4/L5. It arises because of a defect in the pars interarticularis of the vertebra, and may be either congenital or acquired (e.g. trauma). The condition is associated with mechanical pain which worsens throughout the day. The pain may radiate to one or other leg and there may be signs of nerve root irritation. Small spondylolistheses, often associated with degenerative disease of the lumbar spine, may be treated conservatively with simple analgesics. A large spondylolisthesis causing severe symptoms should be treated with spinal fusion.

### Spinal stenosis

Narrowing of the lower spinal canal compresses the cauda equina, resulting in back and buttock pain, typically coming on after a period of walking and easing with rest. Accordingly it is sometimes called spinal claudication. Causes include disc prolapse, degenerative osteophyte formation, tumour and congenital narrowing of the spinal canal. CT and MRI will demonstrate cord compression, and treatment is by surgical decompression.

### Neck pain

Disc disease, both acute and chronic, the latter in association with osteoarthritis, may occur in the neck as well as in the lumbar spine. The three lowest cervical discs are most often affected, and there is pain and stiffness of the neck with or without root pain radiating to the arm. Chronic cervical disc disease is known as cervical spondylosis.

## OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a disease of synovial joints (Fig. 7.1) and is the most common form of arthritis.

### Epidemiology

The prevalence of OA increases with age, and most people over 60 years will have some radiological evidence of it although only a proportion of these have symptoms. OA occurs world-wide, it is more common in women and there is a familial tendency to develop nodal and generalized OA. Other risk factors are obesity, a fracture through a joint, congenital joint dysplasias, pre-existing joint damage of any cause, occupation (e.g. OA of the hip in farmers and labourers) and repetitive use and injury associated with some sports.

### Pathology and pathogenesis

OA is the result of active, sometimes inflammatory but potentially reparative processes, rather than the inevitable result of trauma and ageing. It characterized by progressive destruction and loss of articular cartilage with an accompanying periarticular bone response. The exposed subchondral bone becomes sclerotic, with increased vascularity and cyst formation. Attempts at repair produce cartilaginous growths at the margins of the joint which later become calcified (osteophytes).

Several mechanisms have been suggested for the pathogenesis:

- Metalloproteinases, e.g. stromelysin and collagenase, secreted by chondrocytes degrade collagen and proteoglycans.
- Interleukin (IL)-1 and tumour necrosis factor (TNF)- $\alpha$  stimulate metalloproteinase production and inhibit collagen production.
- Deficiency of growth factors such as insulin-like growth factor and transforming growth factor impairs matrix repair.
- Genetic susceptibility (35–65% influence) from multiple genes rather than a single gene defect. Mutations in the gene for type II collagen have been associated with early polyarticular OA.

Most OA is primary with no obvious predisposing factor. Secondary OA occurs in joints that have been damaged in some way or are congenitally abnormal.

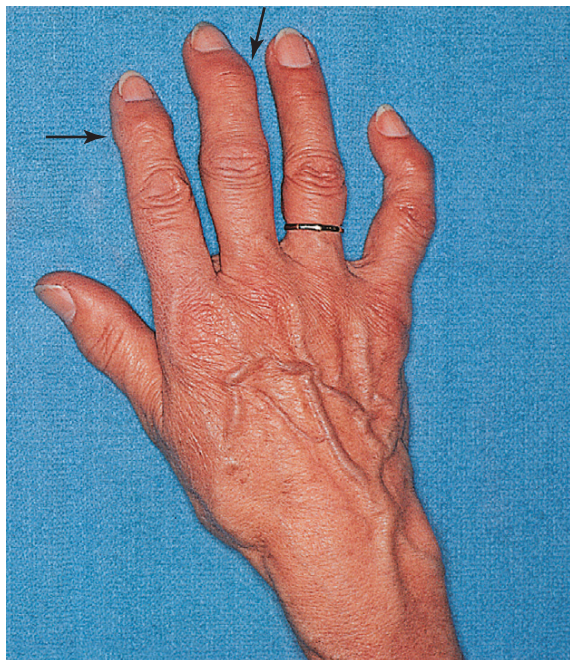
### Clinical features

Joint pain is the main symptom, made worse by movement and relieved by rest. Stiffness occurs after rest ('gelling') and in contrast to inflammatory arthritis there is only transient (<30 minutes) morning stiffness. The joints most commonly involved are the distal interphalangeal joints (DIPJs) and first carpometacarpal joint of the hands, first metatarsophalangeal joint of the foot

and the weight-bearing joints – vertebrae, hips and knees. Elbows, wrists and ankles are rarely affected. On examination there is deformity and bony enlargement of the joints, limited joint movement and muscle wasting of surrounding muscle groups. Crepitus (grating) is a common finding and is probably due to the disruption of the normally smooth articulating surfaces of the joints. There may be a joint effusion. Heberden's nodes are bony swellings at the DIPJs. Bouchard's nodes are similar but occur at the proximal IPJs (Fig. 7.2).

### Differential diagnosis

OA is differentiated from RA by the pattern of joint involvement and the absence of the systemic features and marked early morning stiffness that occur in RA. A chronic arthropathy (pseudo-OA) occurs, predominantly in



**Fig. 7.2** Severe nodal osteoarthritis (OA). The distal interphalangeal (DIP) joints demonstrate Heberden's nodes (arrows). The middle finger DIP joint is deformed and unstable. The thumb is adducted and the bony swelling of the first carpometacarpal joint is clearly shown – 'the squared hand of nodal OA'.

elderly women with severe chondrocalcinosis (p. 296) but the wrists and shoulder are usually involved and the hands rarely involved. Chronic tophaceous gout (p. 293) and psoriatic arthritis affecting the DIPJs (p. 292) may mimic OA.

## Investigations

- Full blood count and ESR are normal. Rheumatoid factor is negative, but positive low-titre tests may occur incidentally in elderly people.
- X-rays are only abnormal in advanced disease and show narrowing of the joint space (resulting from loss of cartilage), osteophytes, subchondral sclerosis and cyst formation.
- MRI demonstrates early cartilage changes. It is not necessary for most patients with suggestive symptoms and typical plain X-ray features.

## Management

Treatment should focus on the symptoms and disability, not the radiological appearances. Patient education about the disease, non-pharmacological measures, drugs and surgery all have a role. Obese patients should be encouraged to lose weight, particularly if weight-bearing joints are affected.

- Physical measures are the keystone of OA treatment. Local strengthening and aerobic exercises improve local muscle strength, improve the mobility of weight-bearing joints and improve general aerobic fitness. Local heat or ice packs applied to an affected joint may also help. Bracing devices, joint supports, insoles for joint instability and footwear with shock-absorbing properties for lower limb OA are also used. A walking stick held on the contralateral side to the affected lower limb joint is useful. Acupuncture helps knee OA.
- Medication. Paracetamol (p. 317) is the initial drug of choice for pain relief, with the addition of a weak opioid, e.g. dihydrocodeine (p. 317), if necessary. NSAIDs (p. 317), e.g. ibuprofen or coxibs are used in patients who do not respond to simple analgesia and should be used in short courses rather than a continuous basis. NSAIDs can also be given topically. Intra-articular corticosteroid injections produce short-term improvement when there is a painful joint effusion; systemic corticosteroids are not used.
- Surgery. Total hip and knee replacement has transformed the management of severe symptomatic OA. There is reduced pain and stiffness and an associated increase in function and mobility. Complication rates are low with loosening and late bone infection being the most serious.

## INFLAMMATORY ARTHRITIS

Inflammatory arthritis includes a large number of arthritic conditions in which the predominant feature is synovial inflammation. There is joint pain and



stiffness after rest and in the morning. Morning stiffness may last several hours (cf. osteoarthritis). Blood tests often show a normochromic normocytic anaemia and raised inflammatory markers (ESR and CRP).

## Rheumatoid arthritis

RA is a chronic systemic autoimmune disorder causing a symmetrical polyarthritis.

### Epidemiology

RA affects 0.5–1% of the population world-wide with a peak prevalence between the ages of 30 and 50 years.

### Aetiology and pathogenesis

Genetic and environmental factors play an aetiological role.

- *Gender.* Women before the menopause are affected three times more often than men with an equal sex incidence thereafter suggesting an aetiological role for sex hormones.
- *Familial.* There is an increased incidence in those with a family history of RA.
- *Genetic factors.* Human leucocyte antigen (HLA)-DR4 and HLA-DRB1\*0404/0401 confer susceptibility to RA and are associated with development of more severe erosive disease. Protein tyrosine phosphatase N22 (PTPN22), STAT4 and PADI-4 have also been identified as susceptibility genes.

The triggering antigen in RA is not known but factors produced by activated T cells (interferon, IL-2 and IL-4), macrophages (IL-1, IL-8, TNF- $\alpha$ ), macrophage inflammatory protein), mast cells (histamine and TNF- $\alpha$ ) and fibroblasts (IL-6, vascular cell adhesion molecule, delay accelerating factor) contribute to the ongoing synovial inflammation. Local production of rheumatoid factor (autoantibodies directed against the Fc portion of immunoglobulin) by B cells and formation of immune complexes with complement activation also maintain the chronic inflammation.

### Pathology

RA is characterized by synovitis (inflammation of the synovial lining of joints, tendon sheaths or bursae) with thickening of the synovial lining and infiltration by inflammatory cells. Generation of new synovial blood vessels is induced by angiogenic cytokines, and activated endothelial cells produce adhesion molecules such as vascular cell adhesion molecule-1 (VCAM-1) which expedite extravasation of leucocytes into the synovium. The synovium proliferates and grows out over the surface of cartilage, producing a

tumour-like mass called 'pannus'. Pannus destroys the articular cartilage and subchondral bone, producing bony erosions.

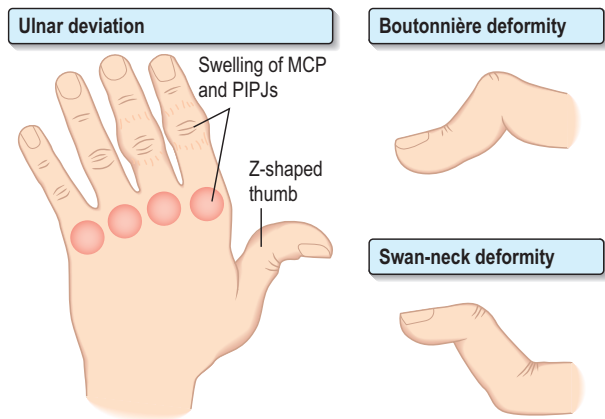
## Clinical features

The typical presentation is with an insidious onset of pain, early-morning stiffness (lasting more than 30 minutes) and swelling in the small joints of the hands and feet. There is spindling of the fingers caused by swelling of the PIPJs but not DIPJs. The metacarpophalangeal and wrist joints are also swollen. As the disease progresses there is weakening of joint capsules, causing joint instability, subluxation (partial dislocation) and deformity. The characteristic deformities of the rheumatoid hand are shown in Fig. 7.3. Most patients eventually have many joints involved, including the wrists, elbows, shoulders, cervical spine, knees, ankles and feet. The dorsal and lumbar spine are not involved. Joint effusions and wasting of muscles around the affected joints are early features. Less common presentations are 'explosive' (sudden onset of widespread arthritis), palindromic (relapsing and remitting monoarthritis of different large joints), or with a systemic illness with few joint symptoms initially.

In patients presenting with disproportionate involvement of a single joint, septic arthritis (p. 296) must be excluded before the symptoms are attributed to a disease flare-up.

## Non-articular manifestations

Periarticular features of RA include bursitis, tenosynovitis, muscle wasting and subcutaneous nodules (rheumatoid nodules) usually over pressure points



**Fig. 7.3** Characteristic hand deformities in rheumatoid arthritis. MCP, metacarpophalanges; PIPJs, proximal interphalangeal joints.

at the elbow, the finger joints and Achilles tendon. Nodules may also occur in the pleura, pericardium and lung.

Other non-articular manifestations are summarized in Table 7.5. Patients with RA also have a greater risk of infection and osteoporosis. The chronic inflammation and endothelial damage associated with RA contributes to accelerated atherosclerosis, which is partly responsible for the increased mortality rate in severe RA.

## Investigations

The diagnosis of RA cannot be established by a single laboratory test and depends on the aggregation of characteristic clinical features (symmetrical peripheral polyarthritis with morning stiffness and nodules in some patients), blood tests and radiological appearances.

- Blood count. There is usually a normochromic, normocytic anaemia and thrombocytosis. The ESR and CRP are raised in proportion to the activity of the inflammatory process.
- Serum autoantibodies. Anti-CCP p. 273 has high specificity (90%) and sensitivity (80%) for RA and is particularly useful to distinguish early RA from acute transient synovitis. Rheumatoid factor (see above) is positive in 70% of cases and antinuclear factor at low titre in 30% (p. 299). Rheumatoid factor is not specific for RA and may occur in connective tissue diseases and some infections.
- X-ray of the affected joints shows soft tissue swelling in early disease and later joint narrowing, erosions at the joint margins and porosis of periarticular bone and cysts.
- Synovial fluid is sterile with a high neutrophil count in uncomplicated disease. In a suddenly painful joint septic arthritis should be suspected and appropriate tests completed (p. 296).

## Differential diagnosis

In the patient with symmetrical peripheral polyarthritis, prolonged morning stiffness, rheumatoid nodules and positive anti-CCP or rheumatoid factor, the diagnosis is straightforward. RA must be distinguished from symmetrical seronegative spondyloarthropathies; severe RA can mimic a form of psoriatic arthritis known as 'arthritis mutilans' (p. 292). In a young woman presenting with joint pains, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) must be considered, but characteristically the joints look normal on examination in this condition. Acute viral polyarthritis (rubella, hepatitis B or parvovirus) must be considered in the differential diagnosis of early RA but these rarely last longer than 6 weeks. Anti-CCP will be negative.

## Management

No treatment cures RA; therefore the therapeutic goals are remission of symptoms, a return of full function and the maintenance of remission with

**Table 7.5** Non-articular manifestations of rheumatoid arthritis

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Systemic</b>                     | Fever   |
|                                     | Fatigue   |
|                                     | Weight loss   |
| <b>Eyes</b>                         | Sjögren's syndrome  |
|                                     | Scleritis   |
|                                     | Scleromalacia perforans (perforation of the eye)  |
| <b>Neurological</b>                 | Carpal tunnel syndrome  |
|                                     | Atlanto-axial subluxation   |
|                                     | Cord compression  |
|                                     | Polyneuropathy, predominantly sensory   |
|                                     | Mononeuritis multiplex  |
| <b>Haematological</b>               | Lymphadenopathy   |
|                                     | Felty's syndrome (rheumatoid arthritis, splenomegaly, neutropenia)                              |
|                                     | Anaemia (chronic disease, NSAID-induced gastrointestinal blood loss, haemolysis, hypersplenism) |
|                                     | Thrombocytosis  |
| <b>Pulmonary</b>                    | Pleural effusion  |
|                                     | Lung fibrosis   |
|                                     | Rheumatoid nodules  |
|                                     | Rheumatoid pneumoconiosis (Caplan's syndrome)   |
|                                     | Obliterative bronchiolitis  |
| <b>Heart and peripheral vessels</b> | Pericarditis (rarely clinically apparent)   |
|                                     | Pericardial effusion  |
|                                     | Raynaud's syndrome  |
| <b>Kidneys</b>                      | Amyloidosis (rare)  |
|                                     | Analgesic nephropathy   |
| <b>Vasculitis</b>                   | Leg ulcers  |
|                                     | Nail fold infarcts  |
|                                     | Gangrene of fingers and toes  |

*NSAID, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug.*

disease-modifying agents. Effective management of RA requires a multidisciplinary approach, with input from rheumatologists, orthopaedic surgeons (joint replacement, arthroplasty), occupational therapists (aids to reduce disability) and physiotherapists (improvement of muscle power and maintenance of mobility to prevent flexion deformities). Patients should be advised to stop smoking to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

**NSAIDs and coxibs** (p. 317) are effective in relieving the joint pain and stiffness of RA, but they do not slow disease progression. Individual response to NSAIDs varies considerably and it is reasonable to try several drugs in a particular patient to find the most suitable. Slow-release preparations (e.g. slow-release diclofenac) taken at night may produce dramatic relief of symptoms on the following day. Paracetamol with or without codeine or dihydrocodeine can be added for additional pain relief.

**Corticosteroids** suppress disease activity but the dose required is often large, with the considerable risk of long-term toxicity (p. 655). *Oral corticosteroids* are used in early disease (short-term intensive regimens) and in some patients with severe non-articular manifestations, e.g. vasculitis. *Local injection* of a troublesome joint (see below) with a long-acting corticosteroid improves pain, synovitis and effusion but repeated injections are avoided because they may accelerate joint damage. *Intramuscular depot methylprednisolone* helps to control severe disease flares.

**Disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs** (DMARDs) act mainly through inhibition of inflammatory cytokines and are used early (6 weeks to 6 months of disease onset) to reduce inflammation and thus slow the development of joint erosion and irreversible damage, and reduce cardiovascular risk. *Sulfasalazine* is used in patients with mild to moderate disease and for many is the drug of choice especially in younger patients and women who are planning a family. *Methotrexate* is the drug of choice for patients with more active disease. It is contraindicated in pregnancy (teratogenic) and should not be prescribed (men and women) in the 3 months prior to conception in those planning a pregnancy. *Leflunomide* blocks T cell proliferation. It has a similar initial response rate to sulfasalazine but improvement continues and it is better sustained at 2 years. It is used alone or in combination with methotrexate. All drugs can have serious side-effects (Table 7.6) so monitoring with blood tests is necessary. Azathioprine, gold (intramuscular or oral), hydroxychloroquine and penicillamine are used less frequently.

**Biological DMARDs** currently available work by the following mechanisms:

- TNF- $\alpha$  inhibitors (etanercept, infliximab, adalimumab, certolizumab). They vary in their mechanism of action and frequency and mode of administration. For instance, infliximab is a chimeric (human/mouse) antibody to TNF- $\alpha$  and is given intravenously every 8 weeks after an induction schedule. Etanercept is a soluble TNF- $\alpha$  receptor fusion protein that binds TNF- $\alpha$  and is given by self-administered subcutaneous injection

**Table 7.6** Side-effects of disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs)

| Drug                   | Side-effects                                   |
|------------------------|--|
| Sulfasalazine          | Mouth ulcers                                   |
|                        | Hepatitis                                      |
|                        | Male infertility (reversible)                  |
| Methotrexate           | Mouth ulcers and diarrhoea                     |
|                        | Liver fibrosis                                 |
|                        | Pulmonary fibrosis                             |
|                        | Renal impairment                               |
| Leflunomide            | Diarrhoea                                      |
|                        | Hypertension                                   |
|                        | Hepatitis                                      |
|                        | Alopecia                                       |
| TNF- $\alpha$ blockers | Infusion reactions (infliximab)                |
|                        | Infections (e.g. tuberculosis and septicaemia) |
|                        | Demyelinating disease                          |
|                        | Heart failure                                  |
|                        | Lupus-like syndrome                            |
|                        | Autoimmune syndromes                           |

*All may cause myelosuppression (with neutropenia, thrombocytopenia and anaemia) and regular check of the full blood count is indicated together with other specific monitoring. Rash and nausea are additional side-effects of most of the drugs listed.*

- IL-1 receptor blocker (anakinra)
- Lysis of B cells (rituximab)
- Interleukin-6 receptor antibody (tocilizumab)
- Blocks T-cell activation (abatacept).

TNF- $\alpha$  inhibitors are first-line treatment and slow or halt erosion formation in up to 70% of patients. They currently are used in patients who have active disease despite adequate treatment with at least two DMARDs, including methotrexate. In future the 'biologicals' will be used earlier and in more patients as the cost falls.

## Prognosis

Prognosis is variable; some patients will have minimal disability after many years and others will be severely disabled with most patients between these

extremes. Prognosis can be dramatically altered with early DMARDs given under expert supervision.

## THE SERONEGATIVE SPONDYLOARTHROPATHIES

This title describes a group of conditions (Table 7.7) that share certain clinical features:

- A predilection for axial (spinal and sacroiliac) inflammation
- Asymmetrical peripheral arthritis
- Absence of rheumatoid factor, hence 'seronegative'
- Inflammation of the entheses (Fig. 7.1)
- A strong association with HLA-B27, but its aetiological relevance is unclear.

### Ankylosing spondylitis

This is an inflammatory disorder of the spine, affecting mainly young adults. It is both more common and more severe in men than women.

#### Clinical features

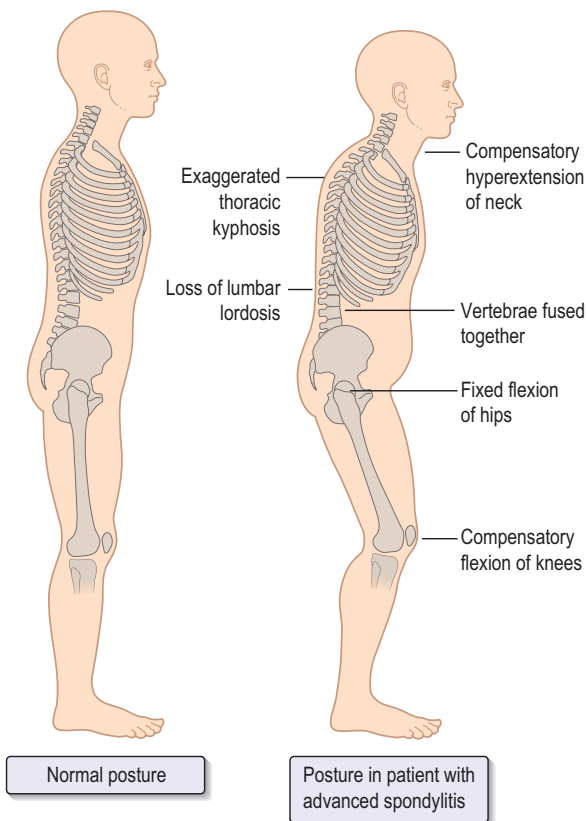
The typical patient is a young man (late teens, early 20s) who presents with increasing pain and prolonged morning stiffness in the lower back and buttocks. Pain and stiffness improve with exercise but not with rest. There is a progressive loss of spinal movement. Inspection of the spine reveals two characteristic abnormalities:

- Loss of lumbar lordosis and increased kyphosis (Fig. 7.4).
- Limitation of lumbar spine mobility in both sagittal and frontal planes. Reduced spinal flexion is demonstrated by the Schober test. A mark is made at the fifth lumbar spinous process and 10 cm above, with the patient in the erect position. On bending forward, the distance should increase to >15 cm in normal individuals.

Other features include Achilles tendinitis and plantar fasciitis (enthesitis) and tenderness around the pelvis and chest wall. Reduction in chest expansion (<2.5 cm on deep inspiration measured at the fourth intercostal space) is due

**Table 7.7** Seronegative spondyloarthropathies

|   |
|---|
| Ankylosing spondylitis                                      |
| Psoriatic arthritis   |
| Reactive arthritis (sexually acquired, Reiter's disease)    |
| Post-dysenteric reactive arthritis                          |
| Enteropathic arthritis (ulcerative colitis/Crohn's disease) |



**Fig. 7.4** Ankylosing spondylitis – the typical posture in advanced cases compared to normal posture.

to costovertebral joint involvement. Non-articular features include anterior uveitis (p. 711) and, rarely, aortic incompetence, cardiac conduction defects and apical lung fibrosis.

## Investigations

- ESR and CRP are often raised.
- X-rays may be normal or show erosion and sclerosis of the margins of the sacroiliac joints, proceeding to ankylosis (immobility and consolidation of the joint). In the spinal column, blurring of the upper or lower



vertebral rims at the thoracolumbar junction is caused by an enthesitis at the insertion of the intervertebral ligaments. This heals with new bone formation resulting in bony spurs (syndesmophytes). Progressive calcification of the interspinous ligaments and syndesmophytes eventually produce the 'bamboo spine' (Fig. 7.5).

- MRI shows sacroiliitis before it is seen on plain X-ray.
- HLA-B27 testing is not usually performed.

## Management

Early diagnosis and treatment is essential to prevent irreversible syndesmophyte formation and progressive calcification. With effective treatment most patients are able to lead a normal active life and remain at work.

- Morning exercises to maintain posture and spinal mobility.
- Slow-release NSAIDs taken at night are particularly effective in relieving night pain and morning stiffness. Methotrexate helps the peripheral arthritis but not spinal disease. TNF- $\alpha$ -blocking drugs (see RA) are highly effective in active inflammatory disease and improve both spinal and peripheral joint inflammation.



**Fig. 7.5** X-ray of bamboo spine in ankylosing spondylitis. In advanced disease there is calcification of the interspinous ligaments and fusion of the facet joints as well as syndesmophytes at all levels. The sacroiliac joints fuse.

## Psoriatic arthritis

Arthritis occurs in 20% of patients with psoriasis, particularly in those with nail disease (p. 807) and may precede the skin disease.

### Clinical features

There are several types:

- *Asymmetrical involvement* of the small joints of the hand, including the distal interphalangeal joints
- *Symmetrical seronegative polyarthritis* resembling RA
- *Arthritis mutilans*, a severe form with destruction of the small bones in the hands and feet
- *Sacroiliitis* – unilateral or bilateral.

### Investigations

- Routine blood tests are unhelpful in the diagnosis. The ESR is often normal.
- X-rays may show a ‘pencil in cup’ deformity in the IPJs (bone erosions creates a pointed appearance and the articulating bone is concave).

### Treatment

This is with analgesia and NSAIDs. Local synovitis responds to intra-articular corticosteroid injections. In severe cases methotrexate or TNF-blocking drugs (p. 287) control both the arthritis and the skin lesions.

## Reactive arthritis

Reactive arthritis is a sterile synovitis, which occurs following:

- Gastrointestinal infection with *Shigella*, *Salmonella*, *Yersinia* or *Campylobacter*
- Sexually acquired infection – non-specific urethritis in the male or cervicitis in the female due to infection with *Chlamydia trachomatis* or *Ureaplasma urealyticum*.

Persistent bacterial antigen in the inflamed synovium of affected joints is thought to drive the inflammatory process.

### Clinical features

The typical case is a young man who presents with an acute arthritis shortly (within 4 weeks) after an enteric or sexually acquired infection, which may have been mild or asymptomatic. The joints of the lower limbs are particularly affected in an asymmetrical pattern; the knees, ankles and feet are the most common sites.

The skin lesions resemble psoriasis. Circinate balanitis causes superficial ulcers around the penile meatus, which harden to a crust in the circumcised male. Red plaques and pustules that resemble pustular psoriasis (*keratoderma blenorrhagica*) are found on the palms and soles of the feet. Nail dystrophy may also occur.

Additional features are acute anterior uveitis, enthesitis (plantar fasciitis, Achilles tendonitis) and the classic triad of Reiter's syndrome (urethritis, reactive arthritis and conjunctivitis). A few patients develop sacroiliitis and spondylitis.

## Investigations

The diagnosis is clinical. The ESR is raised in the acute stage. Aspirated synovial fluid is sterile, with a high neutrophil count.

## Management

The acute joint inflammation responds well to NSAIDs and local corticosteroid injections. Any persisting infection is treated with antibiotics. Most patients have a single attack; relapsing cases are treated with sulfasalazine or methotrexate and TNF-blocking drugs (p. 287) in severe cases.

### Enteropathic arthritis

Enteropathic arthritis is a large-joint mono- or asymmetrical oligoarthritis occurring in 10–15% of patients with ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease. It usually parallels the activity of the inflammatory bowel disease and consequently improves as bowel symptoms improve. An HLA-B27 sacroiliitis or spondylitis occurs in 5% of patients with inflammatory bowel disease which is not related to disease activity.

### CRYSTAL ARTHRITIS

Two main types of crystal account for the majority of crystal-induced arthritis: sodium urate and calcium pyrophosphate. Neutrophils ingest the crystals and initiate a pro-inflammatory reaction.

### Gout and hyperuricaemia

Gout is an inflammatory arthritis caused by hyperuricaemia and intra-articular sodium urate crystals. Hyperuricaemia and sodium urate deposition is also often asymptomatic.

## Epidemiology

Gout is common. The disease is 10 times more common in men, occurs rarely before young adulthood (when it suggests a specific enzyme defect), and seldom in premenopausal females. There is often a family history of gout.

## Pathogenesis

Hyperuricaemia results from overproduction of uric acid or renal under-excretion (Table 7.8). Urate is derived from the breakdown of purines (adenine and guanine in DNA and RNA), which are mainly synthesized in the body. Idiopathic (primary) gout is the most common form and most have impaired renal excretion of uric acid.

## Clinical features

Hyperuricaemia and deposition of sodium urate crystals result in four clinical syndromes:

- Acute sodium urate synovitis – acute gout
- Chronic polyarticular gout
- Chronic tophaceous gout
- Urate renal stone formation (p. 378).

*Acute gout* presents typically in a middle-aged male with sudden onset of severe pain, swelling and redness of the metatarsophalangeal joint of the big toe. The signs of inflammation may extend beyond the joint giving the impression of cellulitis. The attack may be precipitated by dietary or alcoholic excess, by dehydration or by starting a diuretic. In 25% a joint other than in the big toe is affected. Acute attacks must be differentiated from other causes

**Table 7.8** Causes of hyperuricaemia

### Impaired excretion of uric acid

Chronic kidney disease (clinical gout unusual)  
 Drug therapy, e.g. thiazide diuretics, low-dose aspirin  
 Hypertension  
 Lead toxicity  
 Primary hyperparathyroidism  
 Hypothyroidism  
 Increased lactic acid production from alcohol, exercise, starvation  
 Glycogen storage disease type 1 (also increased production of uric acid)

### Increased production of uric acid

Increased de novo purine synthesis (rare) due to:  
 HGPRT deficiency (Lesch–Nyhan syndrome)  
 PPS overactivity  
 Increased turnover of purines  
 Myeloproliferative disorders, e.g. polycythaemia vera  
 Lymphoproliferative disorders, e.g. leukaemia  
 Others, e.g. carcinoma, severe psoriasis

*HGPRT, hypoxanthine-guanine phosphoribosyltransferase; PPS, phosphoribosyl-pyrophosphate synthetase.*

of monoarthritis, particularly septic arthritis. Presentation can also be with a polyarticular inflammatory arthritis particularly in elderly women on long-term diuretics.

*Chronic tophaceous gout* presents with large, smooth, white deposits (tophi) in the skin and around the joints particularly on the ear, the fingers and on the Achilles tendon.

## Investigations

The clinical picture is often diagnostic, as is the rapid response to NSAIDs or colchicine.

- Joint fluid microscopy is the most specific and diagnostic test, revealing long, needle-shaped crystals which are negatively birefringent under polarized light. This is not usually necessary in clinical practice.
- Serum uric acid is usually raised, but may be normal during an acute attack – the levels subsequently increase and should be rechecked several weeks after. However, the diagnosis is excluded if the serum uric acid is in the lower half of the normal range.
- Serum urea and creatinine for signs of renal impairment.

## Management

Acute attacks are treated with anti-inflammatory drugs:

- NSAIDs (p. 317) e.g. diclofenac (75–100 mg immediately, then 50 mg every 6–8 hours), or coxibs, e.g. lumiracoxib 100 mg once daily. After 24–48 hours reduced doses are given for a further week.
- Colchicine (1000 µg immediately, then 500 µg every 6–12 hours) but only if NSAIDs are not tolerated or ineffective. It has a narrow therapeutic window and is extremely toxic in overdose (diarrhoea, abdominal pain, multi-organ failure).
- Corticosteroids: intramuscular or intra-articular depot methylprednisolone.

Further attacks are prevented by reducing serum uric acid levels. Obese patients should lose weight, alcohol consumption should be reduced, and drugs such as thiazides and salicylates should be withdrawn. A diet which reduces total calorie and cholesterol intake and avoids purine-rich foods (offal, some fish and shellfish and spinach) is advised. Patients with frequent attacks (>2 per year) despite dietary changes or with gouty tophi or renal impairment are treated with allopurinol. Treatment is not started within 1 month after an acute attack and NSAIDs or colchicine are given for 4 weeks before and after starting allopurinol, as it may induce an acute attack. Allopurinol inhibits xanthine oxidase (an enzyme in the purine breakdown pathway) and reduces serum urate levels rapidly. Febuxostat is a new non-purine analogue inhibitor of xanthine oxidase and available in some countries but long-term studies are needed.

Asymptomatic hyperuricaemia is not usually treated unless plasma levels are very high or in patients with cancer to prevent the tumour lysis syndrome (p. 255).

### Pseudogout (pyrophosphate arthropathy)

Deposition of calcium pyrophosphate dihydrate in articular cartilage and periarticular tissue produces the radiological appearance of chondrocalcinosis (linear calcification parallel to the articular surfaces). Shedding of crystals into a joint produces acute synovitis that resembles acute gout, except that it is more common in elderly women and usually affects the knee or wrist. In young people it may be associated with haemochromatosis, hyperparathyroidism, Wilson's disease or alkaptonuria (excess homogentisic acid polymerizes to produce a black/brown product deposited in cartilage and other tissues).

### Investigations

- The diagnosis is made on joint fluid microscopy demonstrating small brick-shaped pyrophosphate crystals which are positively birefringent under polarized light (compare uric acid) or deduced from the presence of chondrocalcinosis on X-ray.
- Blood count may show a raised white cell count.

### Management

Joint aspiration with NSAIDs or colchicine forms the mainstay of treatment. Injection of local corticosteroids may also be useful once septic arthritis is excluded on joint fluid examination.

## INFECTION OF JOINTS AND BONES

Infection of the joints is usually caused by bacteria and rarely by fungi. Some viruses (rubella, mumps and hepatitis B virus infections) are associated with a mild self-limiting arthritis but this is not due to direct joint involvement.

### Septic arthritis

Septic arthritis is a medical emergency. Delay in treatment can result in irreversible joint destruction leading to long-term disability. It results from infection of the joint with pyogenic organisms, most commonly *Staphylococcus aureus*. Gram-negative organisms are more common in the elderly or immunosuppressed. Joints become infected by direct injury or by blood-borne infection from an infected skin lesion or other site. Risk factors for septic arthritis are prosthetic joints, pre-existing joint disease, recent intra-articular steroid injection and diabetes mellitus.

## Clinical features

Classically there is a hot, painful, swollen, red joint, which has developed acutely. There may be fever and evidence of infection elsewhere. In the elderly and immunosuppressed and in RA the articular signs may be muted and a high index of suspicion is needed to make the diagnosis. In 20% the septic arthritis involves more than one joint. Prosthetic joint infection may be early (within 3 months of joint infection) or delayed/late. Early infection presents with wound inflammation or discharge, joint effusion, loss of function and pain. Late disease presents with pain or mechanical dysfunction.

## Management

This is summarized in Emergency Box 7.1.

### Specific types of bacterial arthritis

**Gonococcal arthritis**  involves one or several joints and occurs secondary to genital, rectal or oral infection (often asymptomatic). It is the most common cause of septic arthritis in previously fit young adults. Concomitant skin involvement is common (maculopapular pustules). The organism can usually be cultured from the bloodstream and from the joints. Treatment is with penicillin, ciprofloxacin or doxycycline for 2 weeks, and joint rest.

**Meningococcal arthritis**  may complicate meningococcal septicaemia and presents as a migratory polyarthritis. It results from the deposition of circulating immune complexes containing meningococcal antigens. Treatment is with penicillin.

**Tuberculous arthritis**  Approximately 1% of patients with tuberculosis have joint and also bone involvement. The hip, knee and spine (intervertebral disc) are most commonly affected. There is an insidious onset of pain, swelling and dysfunction. The patient is febrile, has night sweats and loses weight. Culture of synovial fluid, synovial biopsy or intervertebral disc biopsy (under CT guidance) is necessary to make the diagnosis. Treatment is as for tuberculosis elsewhere (p. 544) but extended to 9 months, together with initial joint rest and immobilization.

### Osteomyelitis

Osteomyelitis can be due either to metastatic haematogenous spread (e.g. from a boil) or to local infection. *Staphylococcus* is the most common causative organism. Other organisms are *Haemophilus influenza* and *Salmonella* (in sickle cell anaemia). Symptoms are fever, local pain and erythema, and sinus formation in chronic osteomyelitis. Diagnosis is usually by CT, MRI or bone scan (p. 274). Treatment is with flucloxacillin and fusidic acid for at least 4–6 weeks with intravenous medication initially.



## Emergency Box 7.1

### Acute monoarthritis

#### Investigations

- **Joint aspiration** (by ultrasound guidance if necessary) and synovial fluid analysis:
  - Appearance and white cell count (WCC)
    - Normal fluid – straw coloured, contains  $<3000$  WCC/mm<sup>3</sup>
    - Inflammatory fluid – cloudy, contains  $>3000$  WCC/mm<sup>3</sup>
    - Septic fluid – opaque, contains up to 75 000 WCC/mm<sup>3</sup>, mostly neutrophils
  - Gram stain (but may be negative in bacterial infection) and culture
  - Polarized light microscopy for crystals (in gout and pseudogout)
- **Bloods:** Full blood count, erythrocyte sedimentation rate, C-reactive protein, blood cultures
- **X-rays of the affected joint** are of no value in the diagnosis because usually normal initially. Loosening or bone loss around a previously well, fixed prosthetic implant suggests infection
- **Swab** of urethra, cervix and anorectum if gonococcal infection a possibility

#### Treatment of acute non-gonococcal bacterial arthritis

- Initial treatment pending sensitivities: flucloxacillin 1–2 g 6 hourly i.v. (erythromycin or clindamycin if penicillin allergic) and oral fusidic acid 500 mg 8 hourly. Add gentamicin in immunosuppressed patients to cover Gram-negative organisms. Modify treatment depending on culture and sensitivity and continue with two antibiotics for 6 weeks (initial 2 weeks intravenously) and a single antibiotic for a further 6 weeks
- Adequate joint drainage: by needle aspiration, arthroscopy or open drainage. Always refer infection of a prosthetic joint to orthopaedic surgeons
- Immobilize joint in acute stages, mobilize early to avoid contractures
- NSAIDs for pain relief

## AUTOIMMUNE RHEUMATIC DISEASES

Autoimmune disease is a pathological condition caused by an immune response directed against an antigen within the host, i.e. a self-antigen. The autoimmune response may, however, be triggered by an exogenous, i.e. foreign, antigen. Organ-specific autoimmune diseases include Graves' disease, Hashimoto's thyroiditis, pernicious anaemia and type 1 diabetes mellitus. In the autoimmune rheumatic diseases (ARDs) the autoantibodies



are not organ-specific (Table 7.9) and the clinical manifestations are systemic and diverse. These diseases are:

- SLE
- Antiphospholipid syndrome
- Systemic sclerosis (scleroderma)
- Polymyositis and dermatomyositis
- ‘Overlap’ syndromes and undifferentiated autoimmune rheumatic disease.

## Systemic lupus erythematosus

SLE is an inflammatory multisystem disease characterized by the presence of serum antibodies against nuclear components.

### Epidemiology

It is a disease mostly of young women, with a peak age of onset between 20 and 40 years. It affects about 0.1% of the population but is more common in African American women with a prevalence of 1 in 250.

**Table 7.9** Autoantibodies and disease associations

| Antibody                      | Disease   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Antinuclear antibodies        | Non-specific – autoimmune disease, infections, normal individuals             |
| Anti-dsDNA                    | SLE   |
| Anti-histone                  | Drug-induced lupus  |
| Anti-topoisomerase I (Scl-70) | Diffuse cutaneous SSc   |
| Anti-centromeric              | Limited SS  |
| Anti-Ro (SS-A)                | Primary SS, SLE   |
| Anti-La (SS-B)                | Primary SS, SLE   |
| Anti-Smith (Sm)               | SLE   |
| Anti-U1-RNP                   | SLE, overlap syndrome   |
| Anti-JO                       | Polymyositis, dermatomyositis   |
| Cytoplasmic ANCA              | Wegener’s granulomatosis  |
| Perinuclear ANCA              | Microscopic polyarteritis, Churg–Strauss syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease |
| Antiphospholipid              | Antiphospholipid syndrome, SLE  |

*Ds, double-stranded; SS, Sjögren’s syndrome; RNP, ribonucleoprotein; SSc, systemic sclerosis; ANCA, antineutrophil cytoplasmic antibody.*

## Aetiology

The cause of the disease is unknown and is probably multifactorial:

- *Heredity.* There is a higher concordance rate in monozygotic (identical) twins (up to 25%) compared to dizygotic twins (3%).
- *Genetics.* Genes linked to the development of SLE include HLA-B8, -DR3 and -A1 and deficiencies of the complement genes C1q, C2 or C4.
- *Sex hormone status.* The higher incidence in premenopausal women and males with Klinefelter's (XXY) suggests an oestrogen hormonal effect.
- *Drugs.* Hydralazine, isoniazid, procainamide and penicillamine can cause a mild lupus-like syndrome, which often resolves after the drug is withdrawn.
- *Ultraviolet light* can trigger flares of SLE, especially in the skin.
- *Exposure to Epstein–Barr virus* has been suggested as a trigger for SLE.

## Pathogenesis

Apoptotic cells and cell fragments are cleared inefficiently by phagocytes resulting in transfer to lymphoid tissue where they are taken up by antigen-presenting cells. These self-antigens including nuclear constituents (e.g. DNA and histones) are presented to T cells, which in turn stimulate B cells to produce autoantibodies directed against the antigens. The clinical manifestations of SLE are mediated by antibody formation and the development and deposition of immune complexes, complement activation and influx of neutrophils and abnormal cytokine production (increased blood levels of IL-10 and  $\alpha$ -interferon).

## Clinical features

Clinical manifestations are varied (Table 7.10). A symmetrical small-joint arthralgia and skin manifestations are common presenting features. Synovitis and joint effusions are uncommon and joint destruction is very rare. Non-specific features such as fever, malaise and depression can dominate the clinical picture.

Discoid lupus is a benign variant of the disease, in which only the skin is involved. There is a characteristic facial rash with erythematous plaques which progress to scarring and pigmentation.

## Investigations

- Blood count usually shows a normochromic, normocytic anaemia, often with neutropenia/lymphopenia and thrombocytopenia. The ESR is raised but the CRP is usually normal unless the patient has a coexistent infection.

**Table 7.10** Clinical features of systemic lupus erythematosus**Musculoskeletal**

Small joint arthralgia  
Myalgia  
Aseptic necrosis of hip or knee

**General**

Tiredness  
Fever  
Depression  
Weight loss

**Skin**

'Butterfly' rash – erythematous rash on cheeks and bridge of nose  
Vasculitis  
Urticaria  
Photosensitivity  
Alopecia

**Blood**

Anaemia (chronic disease and/or haemolytic)  
Leucopenia/lymphopenia  
Thrombocytopenia

**Lungs**

Pleurisy/pleural effusions (exudates)  
Restrictive defect (rare)

**Heart and cardiovascular system**

Pericarditis and pericardial effusions  
Myocarditis  
Aortic valve lesions  
Thrombosis – arterial and venous  
Accelerated atherosclerosis  
Raynaud's phenomenon

**Kidneys**

Glomerulonephritis

**Nervous system**

Epilepsy  
Migraine  
Cerebellar ataxia  
Aseptic meningitis  
Cranial nerve lesions  
Polyneuropathy

- Urea and creatinine only rise when renal disease is advanced. Low serum albumin or high urine protein/creatinine ratio are early indicators of lupus nephritis.
- Serum autoantibodies: many different autoantibodies are present in SLE (Table 7.9). Anti-dsDNA is specific for SLE and is positive in 70% of cases.
- Serum complement C3 and C4 levels are reduced in active disease.
- Histology. Characteristic histological and immunofluorescent abnormalities (deposition of IgG and complement) are seen in biopsies from the kidney or skin.

## Management

Treatment depends on the symptoms and severity of disease. Patients should be advised to avoid excessive sunlight and reduce cardiovascular risk factors, e.g. cessation of smoking.

- NSAIDs are useful for patients with mild disease and with arthralgia.
- Chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine are used for mild disease when symptoms cannot be controlled with NSAIDs, or for cutaneous disease.
- Corticosteroids form the mainstay of treatment, particularly in moderate to severe disease. The aim is to control disease activity (e.g. prednisolone 30 mg/day for 4 weeks) before gradually reducing the dose.
- Immunosuppressives (e.g. azathioprine, cyclophosphamide), usually in combination with corticosteroids, are used for patients with severe manifestations, e.g. renal or cerebral disease. Newer agents such as rituximab (anti-CD20, p. 254) are used in refractory cases.
- Topical steroids are used for discoid lupus.

## Prognosis

The disease is characterized by relapses and remissions even in severe disease. The 10-year survival is about 90%, although much lower if there is major organ involvement.

## Antiphospholipid syndrome

This syndrome is characterized by thrombosis and/or recurrent miscarriages and persistently positive blood tests for antiphospholipid antibodies (detected by the anticardiolipin, lupus anticoagulant or anti- $\beta_2$ -glycoprotein I test). These antibodies are thought to play a role in thrombosis by reacting with plasma proteins and phospholipids with an effect on platelet membranes, endothelial cells and clotting compounds. Antiphospholipid syndrome occurs on its own or in association with another autoimmune rheumatic disease, most commonly SLE.

## Clinical features

The major clinical features are the result of thrombosis:

- In arteries: stroke, transient ischaemic attacks, myocardial infarction
- In veins: DVT, Budd–Chiari syndrome (p. 177)
- In the placenta: recurrent miscarriages.

Other features include valvular heart disease, migraine, epilepsy, thrombocytopenia, renal impairment and accelerated atheroma.

## Management

Long-term warfarin is given to patients who have had a thrombosis. Pregnant patients with antiphospholipid syndrome are given aspirin and heparin. Aspirin or clopidogrel are sometimes given as prophylaxis to patients with antiphospholipid syndrome who have no history of thrombosis.

## Systemic sclerosis (scleroderma)

Systemic sclerosis (scleroderma) is a multisystem disease with involvement of the skin and Raynaud's phenomenon (p. 487) occurring early. It is three times more common in women than in men, and usually presents between the ages of 30 and 50 years.

## Aetiology

Pathogenesis is complex and not completely understood. Genetic predisposition, immune activation, infection and an environmental toxin initiate an endothelial cell lesion and widespread vascular damage. Increased vascular permeability and activation of endothelial cells result in upregulation of adhesion molecules (E-selectin, vascular cell adhesion molecule [VCAM], intercellular adhesion molecule-1 [ICAM-1]), cell adhesion (T and B cells, monocytes, neutrophils) and migration through the leaky endothelium and into the extracellular matrix. These cell–cell and cell–matrix interactions stimulate the production of cytokines and growth factors which mediate the proliferation and activation of vascular and connective tissue cells, particularly fibroblasts. The end result is uncontrolled and irreversible proliferation of connective tissue, and thickening of vascular walls with narrowing of the lumen.

## Clinical features

**Limited cutaneous scleroderma (LcSSc, 70% of cases)** Usually starts with Raynaud's phenomenon many years before any skin changes (of hands, face, feet and forearms). The skin is thickened, bound down to underlying structures, and the fingers taper (sclerodactyly). There is a characteristic facial appearance, with 'beaking' of the nose, radial furrowing of the lips and limitation of mouth opening (microstomia). There may be painful digital

ulcers, telangiectasia and palpable subcutaneous nodules of calcium deposition in the fingers (calcinosis). CREST syndrome (Calcinosis, Raynaud's phenomenon, Esophageal involvement, Sclerodactyly, Telangiectasia) was the term previously used to describe this syndrome.

**Diffuse cutaneous scleroderma (DcSSc, 30% of cases)** The skin changes develop more rapidly and are more widespread than in limited cutaneous scleroderma. There is early involvement of other organs:

- Gastrointestinal involvement with dilatation and atony in the oesophagus (heartburn and dysphagia), small intestine (bacterial overgrowth and mal-absorption) and colon (pseudo-obstruction).
- Renal involvement – acute and chronic kidney disease. Acute hypertensive crisis is a complication of the renal involvement.
- Lung disease – fibrosis and pulmonary vascular disease resulting in pulmonary hypertension.
- Myocardial fibrosis leads to arrhythmias and conduction disturbances.

## Investigations

The diagnosis of scleroderma is primarily based upon the presence of characteristic skin changes.

- Blood count shows a normochromic, normocytic anaemia and the ESR may be raised.
- Urea and creatinine rise with renal disease.
- Serum autoantibodies (Table 7.9). Antinuclear antibodies are often positive. Anti-topoisomerase 1 (Scl 70) and anti-RNA polymerase I and III antibodies are highly specific for patients with diffuse cutaneous scleroderma. Anticentromere antibodies occur in limited cutaneous scleroderma. Autoantibodies do not occur in all patients.
- Radiology. An X-ray of the hands may show deposits of calcium around the fingers, and there may be erosion and resorption of the tufts of the distal phalanges. High-resolution CT demonstrates fibrotic lung involvement. Barium swallow shows impaired oesophageal motility.
- Oesophageal manometry demonstrates failure of peristalsis in the distal oesophagus, with reduced oesophageal sphincter pressure.

## Management

This is symptomatic and based on organ involvement. There is no specific treatment. Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors are the drug of first choice to treat hypertension and to prevent further kidney damage.

## Prognosis

The 10-year survival is 70% and 55% in limited cutaneous and diffuse cutaneous disease, respectively. Pulmonary fibrosis and pulmonary hypertension are the major causes of death.

## Polymyositis and dermatomyositis

Polymyositis (PM) is a rare muscle disorder of unknown aetiology in which there is inflammation and necrosis of skeletal muscle fibres. When the skin is involved it is called dermatomyositis (DM). PM and DM affect adults and children and are more common in women.

### Clinical features

There is symmetrical progressive muscle weakness and wasting affecting the proximal muscles of the shoulder and pelvic girdle. Patients have difficulty squatting, going upstairs, rising from a chair and raising their hands above the head. Pain and tenderness are uncommon. Involvement of pharyngeal, laryngeal and respiratory muscles can lead to dysphagia, dysphonia and respiratory failure. In dermatomyositis there are also characteristic skin changes: heliotrope (purple) discolouration of the eyelids and scaly erythematous plaques over the knuckles (Gottron's papules). Other features include arthralgia, dysphagia resulting from oesophageal muscle involvement, and Raynaud's phenomenon. DM is associated with an increased incidence of underlying malignancy.

### Investigations

- Muscle biopsy is the definitive test in establishing the diagnosis and in excluding other causes of myopathy. There is inflammatory cell infiltration and necrosis of muscle cells.
- Serum muscle enzymes (creatinine kinase, aminotransferases, aldolase) are elevated.
- Anti-JO antibodies (anti-tRNA synthetase) are positive.
- ESR is usually not raised.
- Electromyography (EMG) shows characteristic changes.
- MRI can demonstrate areas of muscle inflammation.

### Management

Oral prednisolone is the treatment of choice: 0.5–1.0 mg/kg bodyweight continued for at least one month after myositis has become clinically and enzymatically inactive and then tapered gradually down. Immunosuppressive therapy (azathioprine, methotrexate, ciclosporin) is required if there is disease relapse on steroid tapering.

## Sjögren's syndrome

Sjögren's syndrome is characterized by immunologically mediated destruction of epithelial exocrine glands, especially the lacrimal and salivary glands. It predominantly affects middle-aged women.

## Clinical features

The main features are dry eyes (keratoconjunctivitis sicca) and dry mouth (xerostomia). Clinical clues are difficulty eating a dry biscuit and absence of pooling of the saliva when the tongue is lifted. It occurs as an isolated disorder (primary Sjögren's syndrome) or in association with another autoimmune disease (secondary Sjögren's syndrome), commonly rheumatoid arthritis or SLE. Other features of Sjögren's syndrome are arthritis, Raynaud's phenomenon, renal tubular defects causing diabetes insipidus and renal tubular acidosis, pulmonary fibrosis, vasculitis and an increased incidence of non-Hodgkin's B cell lymphoma.

## Investigations

- Serum autoantibodies: antinuclear (in 80% of patients), Anti-Ro (60–90%) and rheumatoid factor in primary Sjögren's syndrome.
- Labial gland biopsy shows characteristic changes of lymphocyte infiltration and destruction of acinar tissue.
- A positive Schirmer test (a standard strip of filter paper is placed on the inside of the lower eyelid; wetting of less than 10 mm in 5 min is positive) confirms defective tear production.

## Management

Treatment is symptomatic with artificial tears and saliva replacement solutions.

### 'Overlap' syndrome and undifferentiated autoimmune rheumatic disease

An *overlap syndrome* combines features of more than one ARD. *Undifferentiated ARD* is the term used when patients have evidence of autoimmunity and some clinical features of ARDs but not enough to make a diagnosis of any individual ARD.

## SYSTEMIC INFLAMMATORY VASCULITIS

Vasculitis is inflammation of the blood vessel walls and can be seen in many diseases including SLE, RA, polymyositis and some allergic drug reactions. The term 'systemic vasculitides' describes a group of multisystem disorders in which vasculitis is the principal feature and classification is based on the size of the vessels affected (Table 7.11). They are all associated with anaemia and a raised ESR and all are rare except for giant cell (temporal) arteritis.



**Table 7.11** Classification of systemic vasculitis**Large (aorta and its major branches)**

Giant-cell arteritis/polymyalgia rheumatica  
Takayasu's arteritis

**Medium (main visceral vessels, e.g. renal, coronary)**

Polyarteritis nodosa  
Kawasaki's disease (affects children <5 years)

**Small (small arteries, arterioles, venules and capillaries)****ANCA positive**

Microscopic polyangiitis  
Wegener's granulomatosis  
Churg–Strauss syndrome

**ANCA negative**

Henoch–Schönlein purpura  
Cutaneous leucocytoclastic vasculitis  
Essential cryoglobulinaemia

*ANCA, antineutrophil cytoplasmic antibodies (p. 299).*

## Polymyalgia and giant cell arteritis

Polymyalgia (PMR) and giant cell arteritis (GCA) are systemic illnesses affecting patients older than 50 years. Both are associated with the finding of GCA on temporal artery biopsy. Patients may have symptoms and signs limited to PMR or to GCA throughout the course of their illness while others have manifestations of both.

### Clinical features

PMR causes an abrupt onset of stiffness and intense pain in the muscles of the neck and shoulder, and hips and lumbar spine. Significant objective weakness is uncommon. There may be constitutional symptoms, with malaise, fever, weight loss and anorexia. Arteritic involvement by inflammation is most frequently noticed in the superficial temporal arteries and causes headache, tenderness over the scalp or temple (combing the hair may be painful), and claudication of the jaw when eating. GCA affecting the vertebralbasilar, and sometimes the carotid, circulation may result in stroke. The most devastating complication of GCA is sudden loss of vision (which may be permanent) due to involvement of the ophthalmic artery. Early recognition and treatment is therefore essential.

### Investigations

Treatment is started based on a clinical diagnosis and investigations showing a very high ESR (around 100 mm/h) and CRP. There is often a normochromic,

normocytic anaemia. Temporal artery biopsy is performed if GCA is suspected and should be performed before or within a week of starting corticosteroids.

## Management

Treatment is with corticosteroids, prednisolone 10–15 mg/day for PMR and 60 mg/day for GCA. The dose is gradually reduced by weekly decrements of 5 mg. Once 10 mg is reached a reduction of 1 mg every 2–4 weeks is usually sufficient. The dose is titrated against symptoms and the ESR. Prophylaxis against steroid-induced osteoporosis should be given (p. 314). The disease may relapse when steroid treatment is stopped.

## Takayasu's arteritis

This is rare except in Japan. Vasculitis involving the aortic arch and other major arteries causes hypertension, absent peripheral pulses, strokes and cardiac failure. Treatment is with corticosteroids.

## Polyarteritis nodosa

Polyarteritis nodosa (PAN) predominantly affects middle-aged men. Its association with hepatitis B antigenaemia in some cases suggests a vasculitis secondary to the deposition of immune complexes. There is a necrotizing arteritis associated with microaneurysm formation, thrombosis and infarction. Clinical features include fever, malaise, weight loss, mononeuritis multiplex, abdominal pain (resulting from visceral infarcts), renal impairment and hypertension. The lungs are rarely involved (cf. antineutrophilic cytoplasmic antibodies (ANCA)-positive vasculitides). The diagnosis is made on angiography (microaneurysms in hepatic, intestinal or renal vessels) or biopsy of an affected organ, often the kidney, which shows features listed above. Treatment is with corticosteroids unusually in combination with immunosuppressive drugs (azathioprine, cyclophosphamide).

## Microscopic polyarteritis (polyangiitis)

This involves the lungs and the kidney where it results in haemoptysis, haematuria, proteinuria and progressive renal failure. Other features include arthralgia and purpuric rashes. Diagnosis is by renal biopsy and measurement of serum perinuclear (p)-ANCA, present in 60%; see p. 299). Treatment is similar to PAN.

## Churg–Strauss syndrome

This is rare and characterized by a triad of asthma, eosinophilia and a systemic vasculitis affecting the peripheral nerves and skin (nodules,

petechiae, purpura) but kidney involvement is uncommon. Treatment is similar to PAN.

### Henoch–Schönlein purpura

This condition is most commonly seen in children and presents as a purpuric rash, mainly on the legs and buttocks. Abdominal pain, arthritis, haematuria and nephritis also occur. It is characterized by vascular deposition of IgA-dominant immune complexes, and the onset is often preceded by an acute upper respiratory tract infection. Recovery is usually spontaneous.

### Cryoglobulinaemic vasculitis

Cryoglobulins are immunoglobulins and complement components that precipitate reversibly in the cold. Types include essential cryoglobulinaemia (no underlying disease) or associated with infection (e.g. hepatitis B and C, HIV) or autoimmune disease. There is involvement of the skin (purpura, arthralgia, leg ulcers), kidneys (glomerulonephritis) and polyneuropathy. Treatment is similar to PAN.

### Behçet's disease

This is a rare multisystem chronic disease of unknown cause and most common in Turkey, Iran and Japan. It is characterized by recurrent oral ulceration. Diagnosis is clinical and requires the presence of oral ulceration and any two of the following: genital ulcers, eye lesions (uveitis, retinal vascular lesions), skin lesions (erythema nodosum, papulopustular lesions), or a positive skin pathergy test (skin injury, e.g. needle prick, leads to pustule formation within 48 hours). Other features include arthritis, gastrointestinal ulceration with pain and diarrhoea, pulmonary and renal lesions, meningo-encephalitis, and organic confusional states. Treatment is with immunosuppressive therapy (steroids, azathioprine, ciclosporin) or occasionally thalidomide.

## DISEASES OF BONE

Bone normally consists of 70% mineral and 30% organic matrix (mostly type 1 collagen fibres). The mineral component consists mostly of a complex crystalline salt of calcium and phosphate called hydroxyapatite. Although major skeletal growth occurs in childhood, adult bone is continuously being remodelled, with bone formation and resorption. Two major cell types are involved in bone remodelling:

- Osteoblasts produce type 1 collagen and regulate its mineralization.
- Osteoclasts produce hydrogen ions and lysosomal enzymes, which remove and resorb the mineral phase and collagen matrix.

## Control of calcium and bone metabolism

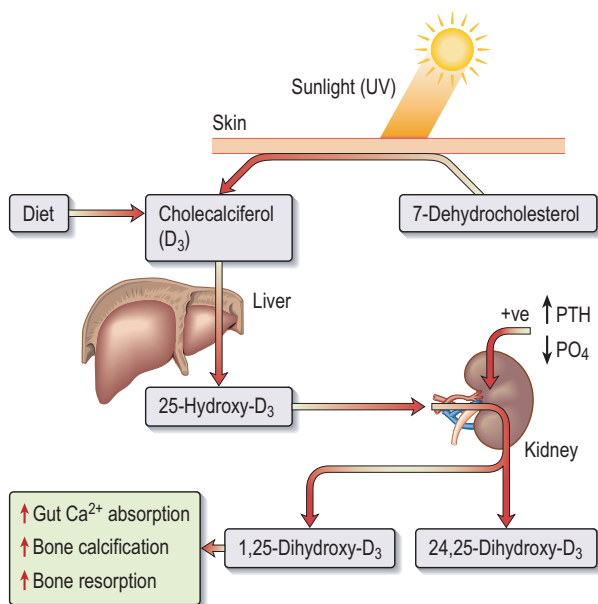
Vitamin D and parathyroid hormone (PTH) are the major factors that control plasma calcium concentration and bone turnover. Bone metabolism is also controlled by calcitonin, glucocorticoids, sex hormones, growth hormone and thyroid hormone.

### Vitamin D

The metabolism and actions of vitamin D are shown in Fig. 7.6.

### Parathyroid hormone (PTH)

PTH is secreted from chief cells of the parathyroid gland. Plasma levels rise in response to a fall in serum ionized calcium. The effects are several, all serving to increase plasma calcium and decrease plasma phosphate:



**Fig. 7.6** The metabolism and actions of vitamin D. The primary sources of vitamin D in humans is photoactivation in the skin of 7-dehydrocholesterol to cholecalciferol, which is then converted first in the liver to 25-hydroxyvitamin D and subsequently in the kidney to the much more active form, 1,25-dihydroxycholecalciferol (1,25(OH)<sub>2</sub>D<sub>3</sub>). Regulation of the latter step is by PTH, phosphate and feedback inhibition by 1,25(OH)<sub>2</sub>D<sub>3</sub>. This step can also occur in lymphomatous and sarcoid tissue, resulting in the hypercalcaemia that may complicate these diseases.

- Increased osteoclastic resorption of bone
- Increased intestinal absorption of calcium
- Increased synthesis of 1,25-(OH)<sub>2</sub>D<sub>3</sub> (Fig. 7.6)
- Increased renal tubular reabsorption of calcium.

## Osteoporosis

This is a reduction in bone mass and micro-architectural deterioration of bone tissue, leading to bone fragility and an increased risk of fracture. Osteoporotic fractures (fragility fractures, low-trauma fractures) occur without major trauma. Osteoporosis is defined as a bone mineral density (BMD) more than 2.5 standard deviations (SDs) below the young adult mean value (T-score  $\leq -2.5$ ). Values between 1 and 2.5 SDs below the young adult mean are termed 'osteopenia'. There are additional risk factors identifiable from the history and examination which increase the fracture risk independently of BMD (Table 7.12) and thus assessment of fracture risk based solely on BMD will miss individuals at risk for fracture.

## Aetiology

Osteoporosis is related to either inadequate peak bone mass and/or ongoing bone loss. Peak bone mass is achieved in early adult life and depends on

**Table 7.12** Risk factors for osteoporosis and fragility fracture

| BMD-dependent  | BMD-independent                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Female sex   | Increasing age                 |
| Caucasian/Asian  | Previous fragility fracture    |
| Hypogonadism   | Family history of hip fracture |
| Immobilization   | Low body mass index            |
| Chronic liver disease  | Smoking                        |
| Chronic renal disease  | Alcohol abuse                  |
| Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease  | Glucocorticoid therapy         |
| Gastrointestinal disease   | High bone turnover             |
| Low dietary calcium intake   | Increased risk of falling      |
| Vitamin D insufficiency  | Rheumatoid arthritis           |
| Drugs (corticosteroids, heparin, ciclosporin, anticonvulsants)                             |                                |
| Endocrine disease (Cushing's syndrome, hyperthyroidism, hyperparathyroidism)               |                                |
| Other diseases (diabetes mellitus, mastocytosis, multiple myeloma, osteogenesis imperfect) |                                |

genetic factors, nutritional factors, sex hormone status and physical activity. Then age-related bone loss occurs with an accelerated loss in women starting around the time of the menopause. The risk factors for osteoporosis are those that cause a reduction in peak bone mass attained in adult life or those that cause increased bone loss (Table 7.12).

## Clinical features

Symptoms of osteoporosis are the result of fractures, which typically occur at four sites: the thoracic and lumbar vertebrae, proximal femur and distal radius (Colles' fracture). Thoracic vertebral fractures may lead to kyphosis and loss of height ('widow's stoop').

## Investigations

- Dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA) is the gold standard in measurement of bone density usually of the lumbar spine and proximal femur. Osteoporosis is diagnosed when the BMD T-score falls below  $-2.5$ .
- Radiology. X-rays demonstrate fractures but are insensitive for detecting osteopenia.
- Serum biochemistry. Calcium, phosphate and alkaline phosphatase are normal.
- Secondary causes of osteoporosis (thyrotoxicosis, myeloma, primary hyperparathyroidism, hypogonadism, coeliac disease) should be looked for by appropriate blood tests in men and premenopausal women.

## Assessment of fracture risk

This should take into account both BMD and clinical risk factors (Table 7.12). Indications for DXA scanning are listed in Table 7.13. The Risk Factor Assessment Tool (World Health Organization [WHO] 2008) estimates the 10-year probability of hip fracture or major osteoporotic fractures combined for an

**Table 7.13** Indications for dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry scanning

|  |
|--|
| Radiographic osteopenia  |
| Previous fragility fracture (in those aged less than 75 years) |
| Glucocorticoid therapy (in those aged less than 65 years)      |
| Body mass index below $19 \text{ kg/m}^2$                      |
| Maternal history of hip fracture                               |
| BMD-dependent risk factors in Table 7.12                       |

*In patients presenting with height loss and/or kyphosis, lateral thoracic spine X-ray is the initial investigation and shows loss of anterior vertebral body height and wedging due to fracture.*

*BMD, bone mineral density.*

untreated patient between the ages of 40 and 90 years ([www.shef.ac.uk/FRAX/](http://www.shef.ac.uk/FRAX/)). It integrates clinical risk factors with femoral neck BMD (hip BMD may also be used in women). It is a guide only, and will not be helpful in all patients e.g. those with low spinal BMD but normal femoral neck. In patients >75 years with a fragility fracture DXA scanning is often not necessary prior to treatment for osteoporosis. FRAX does not identify the level of fracture risk at which treatment should be started and this will vary depending partly on the medical resources of the country. In the UK, osteoporosis treatment is cost-effective for a 4% 10-year risk of hip fracture and 3% in the USA.

## Management

**Prevention and treatment** New vertebral fractures require bed rest for 1–2 weeks and strong analgesia. Muscle relaxants (e.g. diazepam 2 mg three times daily), subcutaneous calcitonin (50 IU daily) or intravenous pamidronate (single dose 60–90 mg) are also given for pain relief. Non-spinal fractures are treated by conventional orthopaedic means. Lifestyle advice includes stopping smoking, reducing alcohol intake, adequate intake of calcium (700–1000 mg/day, 1500 mg post-menopausally) and vitamin D (400–800 IU/day) and regular weight-bearing exercises. In the elderly, physiotherapy and assessment of home safety are done to reduce the risk of falls. Hip protectors may reduce the risk of hip fracture in residential care.

### Pharmacological intervention

- Bisphosphonates (e.g. alendronate, risedronate, zoledronate, p. 319) are first-line treatment in most patients with osteoporosis. They inhibit bone resorption through inhibition of osteoclast activity, increase bone mass at the hip and spine, and most have been shown to reduce fracture incidence. Optimal duration of therapy is unknown.
- Strontium ranelate (2 g daily) is a useful alternative to oral bisphosphonates particularly in the frail elderly who have difficulty in complying with the dosage regimen. Its mechanism of action is uncertain.
- Raloxifene (60 mg daily), a selective oestrogen-receptor modulator (SERM), activates oestrogen receptors on bone while having no stimulatory effect on endometrium (cf: hormone replacement therapy [HRT], p. 314). It has been shown to reduce BMD loss at spine and hip, though fracture rates are reduced only in the spine. Side-effects are leg cramps, flushing, increased risk of thromboembolism (similar to HRT) and stroke.
- Recombinant human parathyroid peptide 1-34 (teriparatide) and recombinant human parathyroid hormone 1-84 stimulate bone formation and are both given by daily subcutaneous injection. They are indicated for severe cases of osteoporosis or in women who are intolerant of, or fail to respond to other therapies. A side-effect is hypercalcaemia.

- Oestrogen therapy as HRT is second-line therapy because of adverse effects e.g. breast cancer and increased cardiovascular disease risk with long-term use (see p. 319). It is used for postmenopausal women who are at high risk of fracture and also have perimenopausal symptoms.
- Testosterone is given to men with biochemical evidence of hypogonadism.

### Glucocorticoid-induced osteoporosis

Oral corticosteroids are associated with a significant fracture risk at the hip and spine. General measures to reduce the fracture risk include reduction of the dose of corticosteroids to a minimum, an alternative route of administration (e.g. rectal steroids in distal ulcerative colitis) and prescription of alternative immunosuppressive agents. All patients should be given calcium and vitamin D supplements and lifestyle advice as above. In addition all patients over the age of 65 years or with a previous fragility fracture are given drug treatment for osteoporosis. Bisphosphonates and teriparatide are licensed in the UK for this purpose. Drug treatment is given to younger patients based on the results of a DXA scan and clinical risk factors.

### Osteonecrosis

Osteonecrosis (avascular necrosis, ischaemic necrosis) is death of bone and marrow cells due to a reduced blood supply (vascular damage, increased intraosseous pressure, mechanical stresses). The many causes include medication (glucocorticoids, bisphosphonates), alcohol abuse, sickle cell disease, trauma, radiation and HIV infection. The femoral neck is the commonest site affected and presents with pain and arthropathy and bony collapse if untreated. Diagnosis is by MRI; plain X-ray will not show early changes. Treatment depends on the cause and the site affected.

### Paget's disease

This is a focal disorder of bone remodelling in which there is increased osteoclastic bone resorption followed by formation of weaker new bone, increased local bone blood flow and fibrous tissue. The incidence increases with age; it is rare in the under-40s and affects up to 10% of adults by the age of 90 years.

### Aetiology

The aetiology is unknown. The disease may result from a latent viral infection (canine distemper virus, measles or respiratory syncytial virus) in osteoclasts in a genetically susceptible host (increased risk in family members, susceptibility genes identified).



## Clinical features

The most common sites are the pelvis, lumbar spine, femur, thoracic spine, skull and tibia, although any bone can be involved. Most cases are asymptomatic, but features include the following:

- Pain in the bone pain or nearby joint (cartilage or adjacent bone is damaged).
- Deformities: enlargement of the skull, bowing of the tibia
- Complications: nerve compression (deafness, paraparesis), pathological fractures, rarely high-output cardiac failure (due to increased bone blood flow) and osteogenic sarcoma.

## Investigations

- Serum alkaline phosphatase concentration is raised (reflects level of bone formation), often >1000 U/L, with a normal calcium and phosphate. Urinary hydroxyproline excretion is raised and may be used as a marker of disease activity.
- X-rays show characteristic changes in affected bone. There is localized bony enlargement and distortion, sclerotic changes (increased density) and osteolytic areas (loss of bone and reduced density).
- Radionuclide bone scans showing increased uptake of bone-seeking radionuclides. Appearances are similar to metastatic sclerotic carcinoma, especially from breast and prostate.

## Treatment

Bisphosphonates (intravenous zoledronate or oral, p. 319) inhibit bone resorption by decreasing osteoclastic activity, and form the mainstay of treatment. They are indicated for symptomatic patients and asymptomatic patients at risk of complications (e.g. fracture, nerve entrapment). Disease activity is monitored by symptoms and measurement of serum alkaline phosphatase or urinary hydroxyproline.

## Osteomalacia and vitamin D deficiency

Inadequate mineralization of the osteoid framework, leading to soft bones, produces rickets during bone growth in children and osteomalacia following epiphyseal closure in adults. Osteomalacia and rickets are the clinical manifestations of profound vitamin D deficiency. The major source of vitamin D is from skin photosynthesis following ultraviolet B sunlight exposure (Fig. 7.6). A small amount is obtained from dietary sources (oily fish, egg yolks, supplemented breakfast cereals, margarine).

## Aetiology

Individuals at risk for vitamin D deficiency are those with pigmented skin, use of sunscreen or concealing clothing, the elderly and institutionalized (particularly nursing home residents), malabsorption, short bowel, renal disease (inadequate conversion of 25-(OH)D<sub>3</sub> to 1,25-(OH)<sub>2</sub>D<sub>3</sub>), cholestatic liver disease and patients taking anticonvulsants, rifampicin or highly active antiretroviral treatment.

## Clinical features

Proximal muscle weakness and pain are the common symptoms. Low bone density on DXA scanning or osteopenia on plain X-rays may also be a manifestation of vitamin D deficiency. Severe vitamin D deficiency may present with hypocalcaemia, tetany and seizures. Rickets in children presents with bony deformity (knock knees, bowed legs) and impaired growth.

## Investigations

- Serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D<sub>3</sub> (IHD) is low (<25 nmol/L, 10 µg/L) in osteomalacia. Serum OHD concentrations between 25 and 50 nmol/L suggest vitamin D insufficiency.
- Serum biochemistry: alkaline phosphatase is usually high. Phosphate and calcium may be normal or low.
- Radiology. X-ray appearance is characteristic, showing defective mineralization and Looser's zones (low-density bands extending from the cortex inwards in the shafts of the long bones).

## Management

Treatment of vitamin D deficiency is with oral calciferol 10 000 IU daily or 60 000 IU weekly for 8–12 weeks and then a maintenance dose of 1000 IU daily (10 000 IU weekly). Patients with severe malabsorption are treated with intramuscular calciferol 300 000 IU monthly for 3 months and then yearly maintenance doses. Vitamin D insufficiency is associated with adverse health effects (increased risk of type 2 diabetes mellitus, several cancers, cardiovascular disease) and should also be treated (1000 IU daily).

## THERAPEUTICS

### Anti-inflammatories and pain relief

Aspirin (p. 243) is indicated for transient musculoskeletal pain and pyrexia. In inflammatory conditions NSAIDs are usually given. Paracetamol is similar in efficacy to aspirin, but has no demonstrable anti-inflammatory activity. It is first-line treatment in pain relief where anti-inflammatories are not routinely indicated. Codeine may be added when paracetamol alone is insufficient.

## Paracetamol (acetaminophen)

### Mechanism of action

Inhibits synthesis of prostaglandins in the central nervous system and peripherally blocks pain impulse generation. Reduces pyrexia by inhibition of the hypothalamic heat-regulating centre.

### Indications

Mild to moderate pain, pyrexia. NSAIDs are preferred for pain relief in the inflammatory arthritides.

### Preparations and dose

*Tablets, capsules, dispersible tablets: 500 mg; Suspension 250 mg/ml; Suppositories 60 mg, 125 mg, 250 mg, 500 mg; Intravenous infusion 10 mg/mL in 50 mL or 100 mL vial.*

**Oral or rectal:** 0.5–1 g every 4–6 hours to a maximum of 4 g daily (3 g if weight <50 kg or liver disease).

**IV infusion** over 15 minutes: 1 g every 4–6 hours, maximum 4 daily; 15 mg/kg if body weight <50 kg. Mainly used postoperatively.

### Side-effects

Rare unless in overdose (p. 597).

### Cautions/contraindications

Dosing interval 6 hours or greater if estimated glomerular filtration rate <30 mL/min. Reduce dose in severe liver disease.

### Compound preparations

Paracetamol (500 mg) is also available combined with a low dose of an opioid analgesic e.g. codeine phosphate 8 mg, 15 mg or 30 mg, in tablet, dispersible tablet or capsule form. The dose of opioid may be enough to cause opioid side-effects (p. 267).

## Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs

### Mechanism of action

Inhibition of cyclo-oxygenase (COX), the enzyme which catalyses the synthesis of cyclic endoperoxidases from arachidonic acid to form prostaglandins. Inhibition of the COX-1 isoform in the gastrointestinal tract leads to a reduction in protective prostaglandins and predisposes to gastroduodenal damage. COX-2 is the form mainly induced in response to pro-inflammatory cytokines. The selective inhibitors of COX-2 ('coxibs', etoricoxib and celecoxib) have a lower risk of gastroduodenal damage than the non-selective NSAIDs (e.g. ibuprofen, diclofenac).

## Indications

Treatment is given in the smallest dose necessary for the shortest time.

- Pain and inflammation associated with inflammatory arthritides and severe osteoarthritis (paracetamol gives similar pain relief in mild/moderate).
- Crystal synovitis
- Transient musculoskeletal pain.
- Pain caused by secondary bone tumours.

## Preparations and dose

There are many different NSAIDs. They vary in their anti-inflammatory properties and tolerability, e.g. ibuprofen has fewer side-effects than other NSAIDs but anti-inflammatory activity is weaker. Indometacin is more potent with a higher incidence of side-effects. Diclofenac and naproxen lie somewhere between these two in potency and side-effects.

Two examples of non-selective NSAIDs are listed and one coxib.

**Ibuprofen** *Tablets: 200 mg, 400 mg, 600 mg, 800 mg; Syrup: 100 mg/5 mL.*

**Oral** Initially 1.2–1.8 g daily in three to four divided doses after food, increased to a maximum of 2.4 g daily if necessary. Maintenance 0.6–1.2 g daily in divided doses.

**Diclofenac** *Tablets: 25 mg, 50 mg; Suppositories: 25 mg, 50 mg, 100 mg; Injection: 75 mg/3 mL.*

**Oral/rectal** 75–150 mg daily in two to three divided doses.

**IM** 75 mg once or twice daily for up to 2 days.

**Celecoxib** *Capsules 100 mg, 200 mg.*

**Oral** 200 mg in 1–2 divided doses, increased if necessary to maximum 400 mg daily.

## Side-effects

*Gastrointestinal toxicity* with highest risk in the elderly. Inflammation and ulceration can occur throughout the gut but clinically most apparent in the stomach and duodenum (dyspepsia, erosions, ulceration, bleeding, perforation). Of the non-selective NSAIDs, ibuprofen is associated with the lowest risk, and piroxicam, indometacin and diclofenac with intermediate risk. NSAIDs associated with the lowest risk are generally preferred, and the lowest NSAID dose compatible with symptom relief should be prescribed. Co-prescribe proton pump inhibitors with non-selective NSAIDs in high-risk patients (>65 years, previous peptic ulceration, serious comorbidity, other medication that increases gastrointestinal risk: warfarin, aspirin, corticosteroids) to reduce gastroduodenal damage.

*Others:* hypersensitivity reactions (particularly rashes, bronchospasm, angio-oedema), blood disorders, fluid retention (may precipitate cardiac

failure in the elderly), acute kidney injury, hepatitis, pancreatitis and exacerbation of colitis.

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in patients with a history of hypersensitivity to aspirin or any other NSAID – which includes those in whom attacks of asthma, angioedema, urticaria or rhinitis have been precipitated by aspirin or any other NSAID. Contraindicated in severe heart failure. Selective COX-2 inhibitors are contraindicated in ischaemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, peripheral arterial disease, and moderate or severe heart failure. Avoid NSAIDs, unless absolutely necessary, in patients with active or previous gastrointestinal ulceration and in patients taking anticoagulants, corticosteroids or aspirin because of gastrointestinal risk. In patients with renal, cardiac or hepatic impairment, NSAIDs may cause a deterioration in organ function. NSAIDs may cause a flare of inflammatory bowel disease and should be avoided if possible. For interactions of NSAIDs, see a national formulary.

## Drugs affecting bone metabolism

### Bisphosphonates

#### Mechanism of action

Adsorbed onto hydroxyapatite crystals in bone and inhibit growth and activity of osteoclasts, thereby reducing the rate of bone turnover.

#### Indications

Prophylaxis and treatment of osteoporosis in combination with calcium (700–1000 mg daily, 1500 mg post-menopausally) and vitamin D (800 IU/day) supplements if dietary intake inadequate. Treatment of Paget's disease and hypercalcaemia of malignancy, treatment of osteolytic lesions and bone pain in bone metastases associated with breast cancer or multiple myeloma.

#### Preparations and dose

**Alendronic acid** *Tablets: daily 10 mg; once weekly: 70 mg.*

Treatment and prevention of osteoporosis: 10 mg daily at least 30 minutes before breakfast or 70 mg once weekly.

Because of severe oesophageal reactions (oesophagitis, oesophageal ulcers and strictures), patients should be advised to take the tablets with a full glass of water on rising, to take them on an empty stomach at least 30 minutes before the first food or drink of the day and to stand or sit for at least 30 minutes. Also advise patients to stop the tablets and seek medical attention if symptoms of oesophageal irritation develop.

**Risedronate** *Tablets: 5 mg, 30 mg; once weekly: 35 mg.*

Prevention and treatment of osteoporosis: 5 mg daily or 35 mg weekly.

Paget's disease: 30 mg daily for 2 months; may be repeated if necessary after at least 2 months.

Precautions for taking risedronate are as for alendronate (above). No food or drink for 2 hours after risedronate.

**Disodium pamidronate** *Injection: 15 mg, 30 mg, 60 mg, 90 mg.*

**IV** Patients should be hydrated first.

Hypercalcaemia of malignancy: Serum calcium  $<3.0$  mmol/L, give 15–30 mg; serum calcium  $>4.0$  mmol/L, give 90 mg. Give as single infusion or in multiple infusions over 2–4 consecutive days. Each 60 mg must be diluted with at least 250 mL sodium chloride and given over at least 1 hour.

Osteolytic lesions and bone pain in bone metastases associated with breast cancer or multiple myeloma: 90 mg every 4 weeks (or every 3 weeks to coincide with chemotherapy in breast cancer).

Paget's disease: 30 mg once a week for 6 weeks; may be repeated every 6 months.

## Side-effects

Gastrointestinal side-effects (dyspepsia, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, constipation), influenza-like symptoms, oesophageal reactions (see above), musculoskeletal pain. With intravenous disodium pamidronate: biochemical abnormalities (hypophosphataemia, hypocalcaemia, hyper- or hyperkalaemia, hypernatraemia), anaemia, thrombocytopenia, lymphocytopenia, seizures, acute kidney injury, conjunctivitis. Osteonecrosis of the jaw – greatest risk is in patients receiving intravenous bisphosphonates for cancer indications.

## Cautions/contraindications

Correct vitamin D deficiency and hypocalcaemia before starting. Avoid risedronate and alendronate in symptomatic oesophageal disorders. Dose adjustment in severe renal impairment (see *National Formulary*).

## Calcium

Reference nutrient intake 700 mg.

## Indications

Hypocalcaemia, osteomalacia, when dietary calcium intake (with or without vitamin D) is deficient in the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis.

## Preparations and dose

**Calcium carbonate** *Chewable tablets (calcium 500 mg or  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  12.6 mmol); Dispersible tablets: 400 (calcium 400 mg or  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  10 mmol), 1000 (calcium 1 g or  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  25 mmol); Syrup (calcium 108.3 mg or  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  2.7 mmol/5 mL).*

Osteoporosis and calcium deficiency: 700–1000 mg daily, syrup 55–75 mL daily.

Osteomalacia: 1000–3000 mg daily, syrup 55–155 mL daily.

**Calcium gluconate** *Injection: 10% (calcium 89 mg or  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  2.2 mmol/10 mL). 10–20 mL over 10 minutes for acute hypocalcaemia.*

## Side-effects

Gastrointestinal disturbances; with injection, peripheral vasodilatation, fall in blood pressure, injection-site reactions.

## Cautions/contraindications

Conditions associated with hypercalcaemia and hypercalciuria.

## Vitamin D

### Mechanism of action

Fat-soluble vitamin whose main action is to promote intestinal absorption of calcium. An oral supplement of 10  $\mu\text{g}$  (400 units) prevents deficiency.

## Indications

- Prevention of vitamin D deficiency in those at risk, e.g. Asians consuming unleavened bread, and in elderly patients, particularly those who are housebound or live in residential or nursing homes.
- As an adjunct in the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis where dietary intake of vitamin D (and calcium) is suboptimal.
- Vitamin D deficiency caused by intestinal malabsorption, chronic liver disease and severe renal impairment.
- Hypocalcaemia of hypoparathyroidism.

## Preparations and dose

**Ergocalciferol** *Calciferol (vitamin  $\text{D}_2$ ) tablets: 250  $\mu\text{g}$  (10 000 units); Calcium (97 mg) and ergocalciferol (10  $\mu\text{g}$ , 400 units) tablets.*

Prevention of vitamin D deficiency: calcium and ergocalciferol tablets 1–2 daily.

Adjunct in treatment of osteoporosis: calcium and ergocalciferol tablets 1–2 daily.

Deficiency caused by malabsorption or chronic liver disease: up to 1 mg (40 000 units) calciferol.

Hypocalcaemia of hypoparathyroidism: up to 2.5 mg (100 000 units) calciferol.

**Alfacalcidol** *1 $\alpha$ -Hydroxycholecalciferol capsules: 250 ng, 500 ng, 1  $\mu$ g.*

Vitamin D treatment in patients with chronic kidney disease: 0.25–1  $\mu$ g daily.

**Calcitriol** *1,25-Dihydroxycholecalciferol: 250 ng, 500 ng.*

Vitamin D treatment in patients with chronic kidney disease: 250–1000 ng daily.

## Side-effects

Symptoms of overdosage include anorexia, lassitude, nausea and vomiting, polyuria, thirst, headache and raised concentrations of calcium and phosphate in plasma and urine. All patients on pharmacological doses of vitamin D should have plasma calcium concentration checked at intervals (initially weekly) and if nausea and vomiting are present.

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in hypercalcaemia and metastatic calcification.



# Water, electrolytes and acid–base balance

## WATER AND ELECTROLYTE REQUIREMENTS

In health, the volume and biochemical composition of both extracellular and intracellular fluid compartments in the body remain remarkably constant. Maintenance of the total amount depends on the balance between intake and loss. Water and electrolytes are taken in as food and water, and lost in urine, sweat and faeces. In addition, about 500 mL of water is lost daily in expired air (Table 8.1). The reference nutrient intake to meet maintenance requirements in adults is sodium 50–100 mmol/day, potassium 40–80 mmol/day and water 1.5–2.5 L (25–35 mL/kg/24 hours). In certain disease states the intake and loss of water and electrolytes is altered and this factor must be taken into account when providing fluid replacements. For instance, a patient who is losing gastric secretions via a nasogastric tube will be losing additional sodium (25–80 mmol/L), potassium (5–20 mmol/L), chloride (100–150 mmol/L) and hydrogen ions (40–60 mmol/L) each day, which will need to be replaced together with the normal daily requirements.

## BODY FLUID COMPARTMENTS

In a normal adult man, 50–60% of bodyweight is water; females have proportionately more body fat than males and total body water is about 45–50% of bodyweight. In a healthy 70 kg male, total body water is approximately 42 L. This is contained in three major compartments:

- Intracellular fluid (28 L, about 35% of lean bodyweight)
- Extracellular fluid – the interstitial fluid that bathes the cells (9.4 L, about 12%)
- Plasma (also extracellular) (4.6 L, about 4–5%).

The intracellular and interstitial fluids are separated by the cell membrane; the interstitial fluid and plasma are separated by the capillary wall.

**Table 8.1** The normal daily water and sodium balance in a 75 kg man

| Input                |      | Output                        |            |
|----------------------|------|-------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Water (mL)</b>    |      | <b>Water (mL)</b>             |            |
| Drink                | 1500 | Urine                         | 1500       |
| Food                 | 800  | Insensible loss (skin, lungs) | 800        |
| Metabolism           | 200  | Faeces                        | 200        |
| Total                | 2500 | Total                         | 2500       |
| <b>Sodium (mmol)</b> |      | <b>Sodium (mmol)</b>          |            |
| Food and drink       | 100  | Urine                         | 100        |
|                      |      | Sweat                         | Negligible |
|                      |      | Faeces                        | Negligible |

**Osmotic pressure** is the primary determinant of the distribution of water among the three major compartments. Osmolality is determined by the concentration of osmotically active particles. Thus 1 mole of sodium chloride dissolved in 1 kg of water has an osmolality of 2 mmol/kg, as sodium chloride freely dissociates into two particles, the sodium ion  $\text{Na}^+$  and the chloride ion  $\text{Cl}^-$ . One mole of urea (which does not dissociate) in 1 kg of water has an osmolality of 1 mmol/kg. Osmolarity is the osmoles of solute per litre of solution (mmol/L) and for dilute aqueous solutions is essentially equivalent to osmolality.

The intracellular fluid contains mainly potassium ( $\text{K}^+$ ) (most of the cell  $\text{Mg}^{2+}$  is bound and osmotically inactive). In the extracellular compartment sodium salts predominate in the interstitial fluid and proteins in the plasma. Body  $\text{Na}^+$  stores are the primary determinant of extracellular fluid volume but plasma volume is determined by oncotic pressure as well as protein concentration (see later). The composition of intracellular and extracellular fluids is shown in Table 8.2. The cell membrane separates the intracellular and extracellular fluid compartments and maintains, by active and passive transport mechanisms, the different electrolyte compositions within each compartment. A change in osmolality in one compartment will trigger water movement across the cell membrane to re-establish osmotic equilibrium.

## Distribution of extracellular fluid

The capillary wall separating the intravascular (plasma) and interstitial spaces is freely permeable to  $\text{Na}^+$ ,  $\text{K}^+$  and glucose, and these solutes do not therefore contribute to fluid distribution between these spaces. However, plasma proteins, e.g. albumin, have a limited ability to traverse the capillary bed, and act to hold water in the vascular space. The distribution of extracellular water between vascular and extravascular (interstitial) space is determined by the

**Table 8.2** Normal adult electrolyte concentrations of intracellular and extracellular fluids

|                               | Plasma<br>(mmol/L) | Interstitial fluid<br>(mmol/L) | Intracellular fluid<br>(mmol/L) |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Na <sup>+</sup>               | 142                | 144                            | 10                              |
| K <sup>+</sup>                | 4                  | 4                              | 160                             |
| Ca <sup>2+</sup>              | 2.5                | 2.5                            | 1.5                             |
| Mg <sup>2+</sup>              | 1.0                | 0.5                            | 13                              |
| Cl <sup>-</sup>               | 102                | 114                            | 2                               |
| HCO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup> | 26                 | 30                             | 8                               |
| PO <sub>4</sub> <sup>2-</sup> | 1.0                | 1.0                            | 57                              |
| SO <sub>4</sub> <sup>2-</sup> | 0.5                | 0.5                            | 10                              |
| Organic acid                  | 3                  | 4                              | 3                               |
| Protein                       | 16                 | 0                              | 55                              |

equilibrium between hydrostatic pressure (i.e. intracapillary blood pressure), which tends to force fluid out of the capillaries, and oncotic pressure (i.e. osmotic pressure exerted by plasma proteins), which acts to retain fluid within the vessel. The net flow of fluid outwards is balanced by ‘suction’ of fluid into the lymphatics, which returns it to the bloodstream (Fig. 8.1).

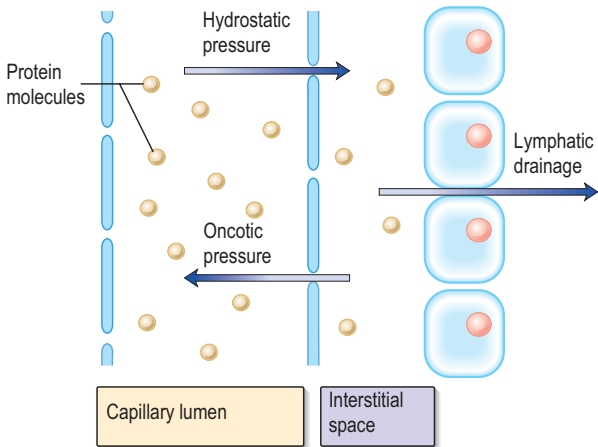
Oedema is defined as an increase in interstitial fluid and results from:

- Increased hydrostatic pressure, e.g. sodium and water retention in cardiac failure
- Reduced oncotic pressure, e.g. as a result of nephrotic syndrome with hypoalbuminaemia
- Obstruction to lymphatic flow
- Increased permeability of the blood vessel wall, e.g. at a site of inflammation, the cytokines lead to an increase in vascular permeability.

Inspection and palpation are usually sufficient to identify oedema. Compression of the skin of the affected area with a finger tip for 10 seconds results in ‘pitting’. Localized oedema is most likely to result from a local cause, e.g. venous obstruction. The location of generalized oedema, e.g. with cardiac failure, is often most prominent in the legs and feet in ambulatory patients and in the sacral region in those who are confined to bed.

## Intravenous fluids in clinical practice

Intravenous fluids are frequently used in hospital to maintain fluid balance in patients who are unable to take fluids via the normal route and to replenish



**Fig. 8.1** Distribution of water between the vascular and extravascular (interstitial) spaces. This is determined by the equilibrium between hydrostatic pressure, which tends to force fluid out of the capillaries, and oncotic pressure, which acts to retain fluid within the vessel. The net flow of fluid outwards is balanced by 'suction' of fluid into the lymphatics, which returns it to the bloodstream. Similar principles govern the volume of the peritoneal and pleural spaces.

substantial deficits or continuing losses. *Crystalloids*, e.g. sodium chloride 0.9%, contain low molecular weight salts or sugars that dissolve completely in water and pass freely between intravascular and interstitial compartments (Table 8.3). Glucose 5% is essentially free water and distributes evenly across total body water (i.e. across all three major fluid compartments) after intravenous administration; very little stays in the intravascular space. Sodium chloride 0.9% remains in the extracellular space and thus about one third of a volume infused will remain in the intravascular space. *Colloids* (e.g. dextran 70, gelatin) contain larger molecular weight substances and remain for a longer period in the intravascular space than crystalloid solutions. Colloids are used to expand circulating volume in haemorrhage (until blood becomes available), burns and sometimes septicaemia. Although remaining in the intravascular space longer than crystalloids, comparative studies have not shown a definite advantage of colloids over crystalloids in hypovolaemic patients. Side-effects of colloids are hypersensitivity reactions including anaphylactoid reactions and a transient increase in bleeding time. They have a greater sodium concentration than plasma.

Assessment and monitoring of fluid balance is made from the history (e.g. vomiting, diarrhoea), fluid balance charts (often inaccurate), daily weights,

**Table 8.3** Crystalloids in general use

|   | Na <sup>+</sup><br>mmol/L | K <sup>+</sup><br>mmol/L | Cl <sup>-</sup><br>mmol/L | Osmolarity<br>mosmol/kg | Indication<br>(see footnote) |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Normal plasma values                              | 142                       | 4.5                      | 103                       | 285–295                 |                              |
| Sodium chloride 0.9%                              | 154                       | –                        | 154                       | 308                     | 1                            |
| Sodium chloride 0.18%/glucose 4%                  | 30                        | –                        | –                         | 283                     | 2                            |
| Glucose 5%  | –                         | –                        | –                         | 278                     | 3                            |
| Hartmann's solution/<br>Ringer's lactate solution | 130                       | 4                        | 109                       | 273                     | 4                            |

*NB: In a normal adult 1.5–2.5 L (25–35 mL/kg/24 hours) of fluid containing about 70–100 mmol sodium and 40–80 mmol potassium are required to maintain balance. Fluids are given with or without potassium chloride (depending on daily requirements and plasma levels) given as ready mixed bags in preference to adding potassium chloride concentrate to a bag.*

- 1. Volume expansion in hypovolaemic patients. Rarely to maintain fluid balance when there are large losses of sodium. Excessive sodium and chloride (compared to plasma) may cause hypernatraemia and hyperchloraemic metabolic acidosis, respectively.*
- 2. Maintenance of fluid balance in normovolaemic, normonatraemic patients.*
- 3. To replace water. Only given alone when there is no significant loss of electrolytes. Also may be alternated with sodium chloride 0.9% as an alternative to (2).*
- 4. In fluid maintenance and replacement. Provides bicarbonate from metabolism of lactate. Also contains calcium 2 mmol/L.*

urine output and clinical observations (skin turgor, capillary refill, jugular venous pressure (JVP), pulse, lying and standing blood pressure). Invasive cardiac monitoring is also used in high-dependency patients. Measurement of central venous pressure before and after an intravenous fluid challenge is also used to assess volume status (p. 581). In the post-operative patient there is usually a short period of oliguria occurring as a physiological response to surgery. Urine output alone should not therefore be relied on to assess fluid balance in these patients. In addition, post-operatively, the ability of the

kidneys to dilute the urine is impaired and there is a risk of dilutional hyponatraemia.

Before intravenous fluids are prescribed a clinical assessment is made to determine:

- If fluids are for maintenance only, or to correct a deficit, e.g. hypovolaemia as a result of diarrhoea and vomiting.
- The type of fluid that is necessary for maintenance and to correct any deficit.
- The appropriate rate of fluid administration and the likely time that intravenous fluids will be necessary.

Suggestions for appropriate use of the different types of fluid is indicated in Table 8.3.

## REGULATION OF BODY FLUID HOMEOSTASIS

Maintenance of the effective circulating volume is essential for adequate tissue perfusion and is mainly related to the regulation of sodium balance. In contrast, maintenance of osmolality prevents changes in cell volume and is largely related to the regulation of water balance.

### Regulation of extracellular volume

The regulation of extracellular volume is determined by a tight control of the balance of sodium, which is excreted by normal kidneys. Although only a small proportion of total extracellular fluid resides in the arterial circulation it is the fullness of the arterial vascular compartment – or the so-called *effective arterial blood volume* (EABV) – that is the primary determinant of renal sodium and water excretion. The fullness of the arterial compartment depends on a normal ratio between cardiac output and peripheral arterial resistance. Thus, diminished EABV is initiated by a fall in cardiac output or a fall in peripheral arterial resistance (an increase in the holding capacity of the arterial vascular tree). When the EABV is expanded, this in turn leads to an increase in urinary sodium excretion and vice versa.

Two types of volume receptors sense changes in the EABV:

- Extrarenal: in the large vessels near the heart
- Intrarenal: in the afferent renal arteriole, which controls the renin–angiotensin system via the juxtaglomerular apparatus.

A decreased effective circulating volume leads to activation of these volume receptors, which leads to an increase in sodium (and hence water) reabsorption by the kidney and expansion of the extracellular volume via stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system and activation of the renin–angiotensin system (p. 655). In contrast, atrial natriuretic peptide (ANP), produced by the atria of the heart in response to an increase in blood volume, increases sodium excretion.

## Abnormalities of extracellular volume

### Increased extracellular volume

Extracellular volume expansion is the result of increased sodium (and hence water) reabsorption or impaired excretion by the kidney.

### Clinical features

These depend on the distribution of excess fluid within the extracellular space (i.e. between the interstitial space and intravascular compartment), which in turn depends on venous tone (which determines hydrostatic pressure), capillary permeability, oncotic pressure (mainly dependent on serum albumin) and lymphatic drainage. For instance, with hypoalbuminaemia there is a reduction in plasma oncotic pressure and predominantly interstitial volume overload. Cardiac failure leads to expansion of both compartments:

- *Interstitial volume overload* – ankle oedema, pulmonary oedema, pleural effusion and ascites.
- *Intravascular volume overload* – raised jugular venous pressure, cardiomegaly and a raised arterial pressure in some cases.

This must be differentiated from local causes of oedema (e.g. ankle oedema as a result of venous damage following thrombosis), which do not reflect a disturbance in the control of extracellular volume.

### Aetiology

Most causes of extracellular volume expansion are associated with renal sodium chloride retention.

- *Cardiac failure* due to a reduction in cardiac output and impaired perfusion (therefore effective hypovolaemia) of the volume receptors. The increased sympathetic activity generated by stimulation of the volume receptors also leads to release of antidiuretic hormone (ADH) even though plasma osmolality (see later) is unchanged.
- *Cirrhosis*. This is through a complex mechanism, but there is vasodilatation and hence underperfusion of the volume receptors. Hypoalbuminaemia may also contribute.
- *Nephrotic syndrome*. Sodium retention is primarily due to increased sodium reabsorption in the renal collecting tubules directly induced by the renal disease. In addition, in some patients the low plasma oncotic pressure induced by hypoalbuminaemia leads to plasma volume depletion and arterial underfilling as in cardiac failure and cirrhosis.
- *Sodium retention*. This may be as a result of renal impairment, where there is a reduction in renal capacity to excrete sodium, or due to drugs such as mineralocorticoids (aldosterone-like actions), thiazolidinediones (by upregulation of epithelial sodium transporter channel) and

non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). The latter inhibit synthesis of vasodilatory prostaglandins in the kidney with an increase in renal vascular resistance and increase in water and sodium reabsorption.

## Management

The underlying cause must be treated. The cornerstone of treatment, the diuretics, increase sodium and water excretion in the kidney. There are a number of different classes of diuretic, of which the most potent are the loop diuretics, e.g. furosemide (Table 8.4 and p. 349).

### Decreased extracellular volume

This may be the result of loss of sodium and water, plasma or blood.

## Aetiology

Volume depletion occurs in haemorrhage, plasma loss in extensive burns, or loss of salt and water from the kidneys, gastrointestinal tract or skin (Table 8.5). Signs of volume depletion occur despite a normal or increased body content of sodium and water in sepsis (due to vasodilatation and increased capillary permeability) and diuretic treatment of oedematous states where mobilization of oedema lags behind a rapid reduction in plasma volume due to diuresis.

## Clinical features

Symptoms include thirst, nausea and postural dizziness. Interstitial fluid loss leads to loss of skin elasticity ('turgor'). Loss of circulating volume causes

**Table 8.4** The main classes of diuretics in clinical use

| Class                   | Example                                    | Mechanism of action  | Relative potency |
|-------------------------|--|--|------------------|
| Loop diuretics          | Furosemide<br>Bumetanide                   | Reduce Na <sup>+</sup> and Cl <sup>-</sup> reabsorption in ascending limb of loop of Henle | ++++             |
| Thiazides               | Bendroflumethiazide<br>Hydrochlorothiazide | Reduce sodium reabsorption in distal convoluted tubule                                     | ++               |
| Aldosterone antagonists | Spironolactone<br>Eplerenone               | Aldosterone antagonist   | +                |
| Potassium-sparing       | Amiloride                                  | Prevent potassium exchange for sodium in distal tubule                                     | +                |



**Table 8.5** Causes of extracellular volume depletion

|   |
|---|
| <b>Haemorrhage</b>  |
| External<br>Concealed e.g. leaking aortic aneurysm  |
| <b>Burns</b>  |
| <b>Gastrointestinal losses</b>  |
| Vomiting<br>Diarrhoea<br>Ileostomy losses<br>Ileus  |
| <b>Renal losses</b>   |
| Diuretic use<br>Impaired tubular sodium conservation<br>Reflux nephropathy<br>Papillary necrosis<br>Analgesic nephropathy<br>Diabetes mellitus<br>Sickle cell disease |

peripheral vasoconstriction and tachycardia, a low jugular venous pressure and postural hypotension. Severe depletion of circulating volume causes hypotension, which may impair cerebral perfusion, resulting in confusion and eventual coma.

## Investigations

The diagnosis is usually made clinically. A central venous line allows the measurement of central venous pressure, which helps in assessing the response to treatment. Plasma urea may be raised because of increased urea reabsorption and, later, prerenal failure (when the creatinine rises as well). This is, however, very non-specific. Urinary sodium is low (<20 mmol/L) if the kidneys are working normally. The urinary sodium can be misleading, however, if the cause of the volume depletion involves the kidneys, e.g. with diuretics or intrinsic renal disease.

## Management

The aim of treatment is to replace what has been lost.

- Haemorrhage involves the loss of whole blood. Immediate treatment is with crystalloid or colloid until packed red cells are available.
- Loss of plasma, as in burns or severe peritonitis, should be treated with human plasma or a colloid (p. 326).

- Loss of sodium and water, as in vomiting, diarrhoea or excessive renal losses, is treated with replacement of water and electrolytes. In chronic conditions associated with mild/moderate sodium depletion, e.g. salt-losing bowel or renal disease, oral supplements of sodium chloride or sodium bicarbonate (depending on acid–base balance) may be sufficient. Glucose–electrolyte solutions are often used to restore fluid balance in patients with diarrhoeal diseases. This is based on the fact that the presence of glucose stimulates intestinal absorption of salt and water (p. 38).
- In the acute situation if there have been large losses of sodium and water, patients are usually treated with intravenous sodium chloride 0.9% (Tables 8.3), and replacement is assessed clinically and by measurement of serum electrolytes. Rapid infusion (1000 mL/h) of sodium chloride 0.9% or colloid is given if the patient is hypotensive.
- Loss of water alone, e.g. diabetes insipidus, only causes extracellular volume depletion in severe cases because the loss is spread evenly over all the compartments of body water. The correct treatment is to give water. If intravenous treatment is required, water is given as glucose 5% (pure water is not given because it would cause osmotic lysis of blood cells).

## PLASMA OSMOLALITY AND DISORDERS OF SODIUM REGULATION

Water moves freely between compartments and the distribution is determined by the osmotic equilibrium between them. The plasma osmolality can be calculated from the plasma concentrations of sodium, urea and glucose, as follows:

$$\text{Calculated plasma osmolality (mmol)} = (2 \times \text{plasma Na}^+) + [\text{urea}] + [\text{glucose}]$$

The factor of 2 applied to sodium concentration allows for associated anions (chloride and bicarbonate). The other extracellular solutes, e.g. calcium, potassium and magnesium, and their associated anions exist in very low concentrations and contribute so little to osmolality that they can be ignored when calculating the osmolality. The normal plasma osmolality is 285–300 mosmol/kg.

The *calculated* osmolality is the same as the osmolality *measured* by the laboratory, unless there is an unmeasured, osmotically active substance present. For instance, plasma alcohol or ethylene glycol concentration (substances sometimes taken in cases of poisoning) can be estimated by subtracting the calculated from the measured osmolality.

## Regulation of body water content

Body water is controlled mainly by changes in the plasma osmolality. An increased plasma osmolality, sensed by osmoreceptors in the hypothalamus, causes thirst and the release of antidiuretic hormone (ADH, vasopressin) from the posterior pituitary, which increases water reabsorption from the renal collecting ducts. In addition, non-osmotic stimuli may cause the release of ADH even if serum osmolality is normal or low. These include hypovolaemia (irrespective of plasma osmolality), stress (surgery and trauma) and nausea. In contrast, at a plasma osmolality of less than 275 mOsm/kg there is complete suppression of ADH secretion.

As discussed previously, sodium content is regulated by volume receptors, with water content adjusted to maintain a normal osmolality and a normal plasma sodium concentration. Disturbances of sodium concentration are usually caused by disturbances of water balance, rather than an increase or decrease in total body sodium.

## Hyponatraemia

Hyponatraemia reflects too much water in relation to sodium; affected patients may or may not have a concurrent abnormality in sodium balance.

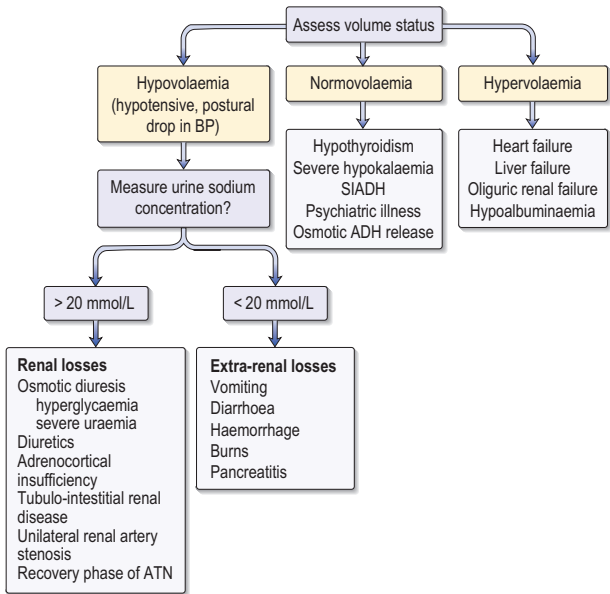
Hyponatraemia (serum sodium  $<135$  mmol/L) may be the result of the following:

- Relative water excess (dilutional hyponatraemia)
- Salt loss in excess of water, e.g. diarrhoea and renal diseases as described above.
- Rarely, pseudohyponatraemia, in which hyperlipidaemia or hyperprotein-aemia results in a spuriously low measured sodium concentration. The sodium is confined to the aqueous phase but its concentration is expressed in terms of the total volume of plasma (i.e. water plus lipid). In this situation plasma osmolality is normal and therefore treatment of 'hyponatraemia' is unnecessary.
- True hyponatraemia must be differentiated from artefactual 'hyponatraemia' caused by taking blood from the drip arm into which a fluid of low sodium is being infused.

Once preliminary evaluation reveals that the hyponatraemia reflects hypo-osmolality (i.e. it is not pseudohyponatraemia or artefactual), assessment of the extracellular volume (pp. 329, 333) allows patients to be classified as hypovolaemic, euvolaemic or hypervolaemic (Fig. 8.2).

### Hyponatraemia resulting from salt loss (hypovolaemic hyponatraemia)

These patients have a deficit of both total body sodium and water, with the sodium deficit exceeding the water deficit. As fluid is lost and the patient



**Fig. 8.2** Diagnosis of hyponatraemia. Osmotic antidiuretic hormone (ADH) release refers to unmeasured osmotically active substances stimulating osmotic release of ADH. These include glucose, mannitol, chronic alcohol abuse and sick-cell syndrome (leakage of intracellular ions). SIADH, syndrome of inappropriate ADH secretion; ATN, acute tubular necrosis; BP, blood pressure.

becomes hypovolaemic there is stimulation of volume receptors leading to thirst and non-osmotic release of ADH. Measurement of urinary sodium helps differentiate between renal and extrarenal sources of fluid loss (Fig. 8.2). For example, vomiting and diarrhoea are associated with avid sodium retention as the kidney responds to volume contraction by conserving sodium chloride. Diuretics are the most common cause of hypovolaemic hyponatraemia with a high urinary sodium concentration ( $[Na^+]$ ).

### Clinical features

These are usually a result of the hypovolaemia and extracellular volume depletion (p. 330). Symptoms directly related to the hyponatraemia are rare, as the loss of both sodium and water limits osmotic shifts in the brain.

## Management

Restoration of extracellular volume with crystalloids or colloids interrupts non-osmotic release of ADH and normalizes serum sodium. Oral rehydration solutions (p. 38) are appropriate treatments in diarrhoeal diseases, resulting in mild hypovolaemia.

### Hyponatraemia resulting from water excess (dilutional hyponatraemia)

An excess of body water relative to sodium is differentiated from hyponatraemia caused by sodium loss because there are none of the clinical features of extracellular volume depletion. This is the most common mechanism of hyponatraemia seen in hospitalized patients. The most common iatrogenic cause is overgenerous infusion of 5% glucose in post-operative patients; in this situation the hyponatraemia is exacerbated by an increased ADH secretion in response to stress.

## Aetiology

Hyponatraemia is often seen in patients with severe cardiac failure, cirrhosis or the nephrotic syndrome, in which there is an inability of the kidney to excrete 'free water'. This is compounded by the use of diuretics. There is evidence of volume overload and the patient is usually oedematous. Where there is no evidence of extracellular volume overload (i.e. euvolaemic patient), causes include the syndrome of inappropriate ADH secretion (SIADH) (p. 647), Addison's disease and hypothyroidism.

## Clinical features

Symptoms rarely occur until the serum sodium is less than 120 mmol/L and are more conspicuous when hyponatraemia has developed rapidly, i.e. over hours. The symptoms result from the movement of water into the brain cells (cerebral oedema) in response to the fall in extracellular osmolality, and include headache, confusion, convulsions and coma. If hyponatraemia has developed slowly the brain will have adapted by decreasing intracellular osmolality, and symptoms occur at a lower serum sodium concentration e.g. <110 mmol/L.

## Investigation

Hyponatraemia in association with cardiac failure, cirrhosis or nephrotic syndrome is usually clinically obvious and no further investigation is necessary. If there is no evidence of volume overload the most probable cause is SIADH or diuretic therapy. Serum magnesium and potassium must be checked, as low levels potentiate ADH release and cause diuretic-associated hyponatraemia.



## Emergency Box 8.1

### Management of hyponatraemia resulting from water excess

- Treat the underlying cause
- Restrict water intake to 500–1000 mL/day and review diuretic therapy
- Correct magnesium and potassium deficiency
- With acute symptomatic hyponatraemia and severe neurological signs (fits or coma):
  - Infuse hypertonic saline 3% (513 mmol/L) at a rate of 1–2 mL/kg/h; 1 mL/kg will raise plasma sodium by 1 mmol/L assuming that total body water comprises 50% of total body weight
  - Aim to raise serum sodium by 8–10 mmol/L in the first 4 hours and 15–20 mmol/L in the first 48 hours
  - Give furosemide 40–80 mg i.v. to enhance free water excretion
  - Serum sodium should not be corrected to greater than 125–130 mmol/L
  - Hypertonic saline is contraindicated in patients who are fluid overloaded; give 100 mL of 20% mannitol

## Management

The underlying cause must be corrected where possible. Most cases (those without severe symptoms) are simply managed by water restriction (to 1000 mL or even 500 mL/day) with a review of diuretic treatment. Management of SIADH is described on page 648. Patients with hyponatraemia developing acutely, in less than 48 hours (often a hospitalized patient on intravenous dextrose), are at the greatest risk of developing cerebral oedema and should be treated more urgently (see Emergency Box 8.1). Vasopressin  $V_2$  receptor antagonists, e.g. conivaptan and tolvaptan, which produce free water diuresis, are being evaluated in clinical trials for the treatment of hyponatraemia.

## Central pontine myelinolysis

Over-rapid correction of the sodium concentration by whatever means must be avoided, as this can result in a severe, neurological syndrome due to local areas of demyelination, called central pontine myelinolysis or the osmotic demyelination syndrome. Features of this include quadriparesis, respiratory arrest, pseudobulbar palsy, mutism, and, rarely, fits. The distribution of the areas of demyelination include most often the pons, but also, in some cases, the basal ganglia, internal capsule, lateral geniculate body and

even the cerebral cortex. Diagnosis is by characteristic appearances on brain MRI.

## Hypernatraemia

Hypernatraemia (serum sodium  $>145$  mmol/L) is almost always the result of reduced water intake or water loss in excess of sodium. Less commonly, it is due to excessive administration of sodium e.g. as intravenous fluids (sodium bicarbonate or sodium chloride 0.9%) or administration of drugs with a high sodium content.

### Aetiology

Insufficient fluid intake is most often found in elderly people, neonates or unconscious patients when access to water is denied or confusion or coma eliminates the normal response to thirst. The situation is exacerbated by increased losses of fluid, e.g. sweating, diarrhoea.

Water loss relative to sodium occurs in pituitary diabetes insipidus, nephrogenic diabetes insipidus, osmotic diuresis and water loss from the lungs or skin. Usually in these situations serum sodium is maintained because an increase in plasma osmolality is a potent stimulus to thirst; serum sodium only increases if thirst sensation is abnormal or access to water is restricted.

### Clinical features

Symptoms are non-specific and include nausea, vomiting, fever and confusion.

### Investigations

Simultaneous urine and plasma osmolality and sodium should be measured.

The passage of urine with an osmolality lower than that of plasma in this situation is clearly abnormal and indicates diabetes insipidus (p. 645). If urine osmolality is high, this suggests an osmotic diuresis or excessive extrarenal water loss (e.g. heat stroke).

### Management

Treatment is that of the underlying cause and replacement of water, either orally if possible or intravenously with 5% dextrose. The aim is to correct sodium concentration over 48 hours, as over-rapid correction may lead to cerebral oedema. In severe hypernatraemia ( $>170$  mmol/L), sodium chloride 0.9% (154 mmol/L) should be used to avoid too rapid a drop in serum sodium. In addition, if there is clinical evidence of volume depletion, this implies that there is a sodium deficit as well as a water deficit, and intravenous sodium chloride 0.9% should be used.

## DISORDERS OF POTASSIUM REGULATION

Dietary intake of potassium varies between 80 and 150 mmol daily, most of which is then excreted in the urine. Most of the body's potassium (3500 mmol in an adult man) is intracellular (Table 8.2). Serum levels are controlled by:

- Uptake of  $K^+$  into cells
- Renal excretion – mainly controlled by aldosterone
- Extrarenal losses, e.g. gastrointestinal.

### Hypokalaemia

This is a serum potassium concentration of  $<3.5$  mmol/L.

#### Aetiology

The most common causes of hypokalaemia are diuretic treatment and hyperaldosteronism (Table 8.6). Blood taken from a drip arm may produce a spurious result.

#### Clinical features

Hypokalaemia is usually asymptomatic, although muscle weakness may occur if it is severe. It results in an increased risk of cardiac arrhythmias, particularly in patients with cardiac disease. Hypokalaemia also predisposes to digoxin toxicity.

#### Management

The underlying cause should be identified and treated where possible. Usually withdrawal of purgatives, assessment of diuretic treatment, and replacement with oral potassium chloride supplements, preferably as a liquid or effervescent preparation (25–40 mmol/day in divided doses with monitoring of serum  $K^+$  every 1–2 days) is all that is required (p. 351). Serum magnesium concentrations should be normalized, as hypomagnesaemia makes hypokalaemia difficult or impossible to correct. Indications for the intravenous infusion of potassium chloride include hypokalaemic diabetic ketoacidosis and severe hypokalaemia associated with cardiac arrhythmias or muscle weakness. This should be performed slowly, and replacement at rates of greater than 20 mmol/h should only be done with electrocardiographic (ECG) monitoring and hourly measurement of serum potassium. Concentrations over 60 mmol/L should not be given via a peripheral vein because of local irritation. Ampoules of potassium should be thoroughly mixed in sodium chloride 0.9%; glucose solutions should be avoided as this may make hypokalaemia worse.



**Table 8.6** Causes of hypokalaemia

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Increased renal excretion</b><br>(spot urinary $K^+$ >20 mmol/L)  | Diuretics, e.g. thiazides, loop diuretics  |
|  | Solute diuresis, e.g. glycosuria   |
|  | Hypomagnesaemia  |
|  | Increased aldosterone secretion<br>Liver failure<br>Heart failure<br>Nephrotic syndrome<br>Cushing's syndrome<br>Conn's syndrome             |
|  | Exogenous mineralocorticoid<br>Corticosteroids<br>Carbenoxolone<br>Liquorice   |
|  | Renal disease<br>Renal tubular acidosis: types 1 and 2<br>Renal tubular damage<br>Rare syndromes with renal potassium loss,<br>e.g. Liddle's |
| <b>Gastrointestinal losses</b><br>(spot urinary $K^+$ <20 mmol/L)  | Prolonged vomiting*, profuse diarrhoea, villous adenoma, fistulae, ileostomies   |
| <b>Redistribution into cells</b>   | Increased activity of $Na^+/K^+$ -ATPase<br>Alkalosis<br>$\beta$ -Agonists<br>Insulin  |
|  | Hypokalaemic periodic paralysis (rare, episodic $K^+$ movement into cells leads to profound muscle weakness)                                 |
| <b>Reduced intake</b>  | Severe dietary deficiency  |
|  | Inadequate replacement in i.v. fluids  |
| <i>*Hypokalaemia primarily due to loss of gastric acid and associated metabolic alkalosis which leads to increased urinary loss of potassium and intracellular shift of potassium.</i> |  |

## Hyperkalaemia

This is a serum potassium concentration  $>5.0$  mmol/L. True hyperkalaemia must be differentiated from artefactual hyperkalaemia, which results from lysis of red cells during vigorous phlebotomy or in vitro release from abnormal red cells in some blood disorders, e.g. leukaemia.

### Aetiology

The most common causes are renal impairment and drug interference with potassium excretion (Table 8.7). An elevated serum potassium in the absence of any of the listed causes should be confirmed before treatment, to exclude an artefactual result.

### Clinical features

Hyperkalaemia usually produces few symptoms or signs, until it is high enough to cause cardiac arrest. Symptoms produced by hyperkalaemia are related to impaired neuromuscular transmission and include muscle weakness and paralysis. It may be associated with metabolic acidosis causing Kussmaul's respiration (low, deep, sighing inspiration and expiration). Hyperkalaemia may produce progressive abnormalities in the ECG (Fig. 8.3).

**Table 8.7** Causes of hyperkalaemia

#### Decreased excretion

Acute kidney injury/acute renal failure  
 Drugs (potassium-sparing diuretics, ACE inhibitors, NSAIDs, ciclosporin, heparin)  
 Addison's disease  
 Hyporeninaemic hypoaldosteronism (type 4 renal tubular acidosis)

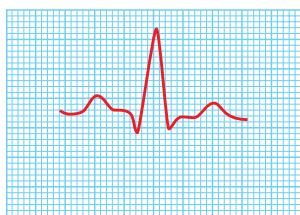
#### Redistribution (intracellular to extracellular fluid)

Diabetic ketoacidosis  
 Metabolic acidosis  
 Tissue necrosis or lysis (rhabdomyolysis, tumour lysis syndrome, severe burns)  
 Drugs (suxamethonium, digoxin toxicity)  
 Hyperkalaemic periodic paralysis

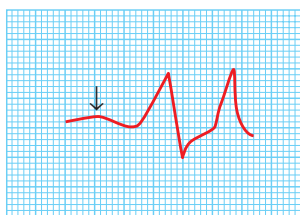
#### Increased extraneous load

Potassium chloride  
 Salt substitutes  
 Transfusion of stored blood

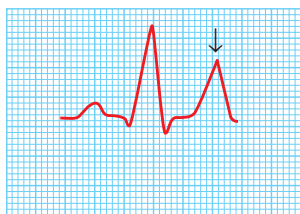
*ACE, angiotensin-converting enzyme; NSAID, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug.*



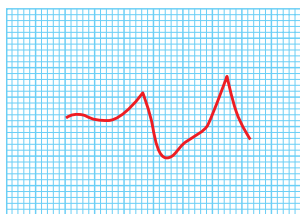
(A) Normal



(C) Reduced P wave (arrow) with widened QRS complex



(B) Tented T wave (arrow)



(D) 'Sine wave' pattern (pre-cardiac arrest)

**Fig. 8.3** Progressive electrocardiographic changes with increasing hyperkalaemia.

## Management

In the absence of any underlying cause (Table 8.7) the serum potassium should be rechecked to rule out spurious hyperkalaemia unless ECG changes are present (Fig. 8.3) that warrant emergency treatment. Mild to moderate hyperkalaemia can be managed by dietary potassium restriction, restriction of drugs causing hyperkalaemia and a loop diuretic (if appropriate) to increase urinary potassium excretion. Severe hyperkalaemia ( $>6.5$  mmol/L) or hyperkalaemia ( $>6.0$  mmol/L) with ECG changes (Fig. 8.3) is a medical emergency (Emergency Box 8.2).

## DISORDERS OF MAGNESIUM REGULATION

Disturbance of magnesium balance is uncommon and usually associated with more obvious fluid and electrolyte disturbance. Like potassium, magnesium is mainly an intracellular cation (Table 8.2) and balance is maintained mainly via the kidney. The average daily magnesium intake is 15 mmol, about one-third of which is absorbed in the small bowel; excretion is via the kidney.



## Emergency Box 8.2

### Management of hyperkalaemia

- **Protect myocardium from hyperkalaemia** (if  $K^+$   $>6.5$  mmol/L or electrocardiographic (ECG) changes present):
  - 10 mL of 10% calcium gluconate bolus i.v. over 2–3 min with ECG monitoring
  - Repeat after 5 min if ECG changes persist
  - NB: This treatment does not alter serum  $K^+$
- **Drive  $K^+$  into cells:**
  - Soluble insulin 10 units + 50 mL 50% dextrose intravenously over 15–30 min and/or salbutamol nebulizer (10 mg) and/or correction of severe acidosis (pH  $<6.9$ ) with 1.26% sodium bicarbonate (500 mL i.v. over 60 minutes)\*
  - Effect of insulin lasts 1–2 h; repeated doses may be necessary
- **Deplete body  $K^+$**  (after emergency treatment):
  - Polystyrene sulphonate resin orally (15 g three times daily with laxatives) or rectally (30 g) binds potassium
  - Treat the cause
  - Stop any extra source of potassium intake or potentiating drugs, e.g. non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors
  - Haemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis if conservative measures fail
- **Monitor:**
  - Blood glucose (finger-prick stick testing) hourly during and for 6 hours after insulin/dextrose infusion
  - Serum  $K^+$  every 2–4 hours acutely and daily thereafter

\*Not to be administered through the same line as calcium salts because of a risk of precipitation.

## Hypomagnesaemia

### Aetiology

Low serum magnesium is most often caused by loss of magnesium from the gut or kidney. Gastrointestinal causes include severe diarrhoea, malabsorption, extensive bowel resection and intestinal fistulae. Excessive renal loss of magnesium occurs with diuretics, alcohol abuse, and with an osmotic diuresis such as glycosuria in diabetes mellitus.

### Clinical features

Hypomagnesaemia increases renal excretion of potassium, inhibits secretion of parathyroid hormone and leads to parathyroid hormone resistance. Many

of the symptoms of hypomagnesaemia are therefore due to hypokalaemia (p. 338) and hypocalcaemia (p. 651).

## Management

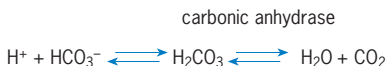
The underlying cause must be corrected where possible and oral supplements given (magnesium chloride 5–20 mmol daily or magnesium oxide tablets 600 mg four times daily). Symptomatic severe magnesium deficiency should be treated by intravenous infusion (40 mmol of MgCl in 100 mL of sodium chloride 0.9% or dextrose 5% over 2 hours), plus a loading dose (8 mmol over 10–15 min) if there are seizures or ventricular arrhythmias. Take care when interpreting repeat serum concentrations after treatment – the extracellular values may appear to normalize quickly while the intracellular concentration requires longer to replenish (may require up to 160 mmol over 5 days to correct).

## Hypermagnesaemia

Hypermagnesaemia is rare and is usually iatrogenic, occurring in patients with renal failure who have been given magnesium-containing laxatives or antacids. Symptoms include neurological and cardiovascular depression, with narcosis, respiratory depression and cardiac conduction defects. The only treatment usually necessary is to stop magnesium treatment. In severe cases, intravenous calcium gluconate may be necessary to reverse the cellular toxic effects of magnesium and dextrose/insulin (as for hyperkalaemia) to lower the plasma magnesium level.

## DISORDERS OF ACID–BASE BALANCE

The pH (the negative logarithm of  $[H^+]$ ) is maintained at 7.4 (normal range 7.35–7.45). The metabolism of food and endogenous body tissues produces about 70–100 mmol of  $H^+$  each day, which is excreted by the kidneys. Bicarbonate ( $HCO_3^-$ ) is the main plasma and extracellular fluid buffer. It mops up free  $H^+$  ions and prevents increases in the  $H^+$  concentration (Fig. 8.4). Bicarbonate is filtered at the glomerulus but is then reabsorbed in the proximal and distal renal tubule. The lungs also constantly regulate acid–base balance through the excretion of  $CO_2$ . Between production and excretion of  $H^+$  ions there is an extremely effective buffering system maintaining a constant  $H^+$  ion concentration inside and outside the cell. Buffers include haemoglobin proteins, bicarbonate and phosphate.



**Fig. 8.4** The carbonic anhydrase reaction.

Acid–base disturbances may be caused by:

- Abnormal carbon dioxide removal in the lungs ('respiratory' acidosis and alkalosis)
- Abnormalities in the regulation of bicarbonate and other buffers in the blood ('metabolic' acidosis and alkalosis).

In general, the body compensates to some extent for changes in pH by regulating renal bicarbonate excretion and altering the respiratory rate. For instance, metabolic acidosis causes hyperventilation (via medullary chemoreceptors), leading to increased removal of  $\text{CO}_2$  in the lungs and partial compensation for the acidosis. Conversely, respiratory acidosis is accompanied by renal bicarbonate retention, which could be mistaken for primary metabolic alkalosis.

Measurement of pH,  $P_a\text{CO}_2$  and  $[\text{HCO}_3^-]$  will reveal which type of disturbance is present (Table 8.8). These measurements are made on an arterial blood sample using an automated blood gas analyser. Clinical history and examination usually point to the correct diagnosis. In complicated patients, the Flenley acid–base nomogram can be used to identify the acid–base disorder that is present when arterial hydrogen ion concentration and  $P_a\text{CO}_2$  are known (Fig. 8.5).

## Respiratory acidosis

This is usually associated with ventilatory failure, with retention of carbon dioxide (p. 584). Treatment is of the underlying cause.

## Respiratory alkalosis

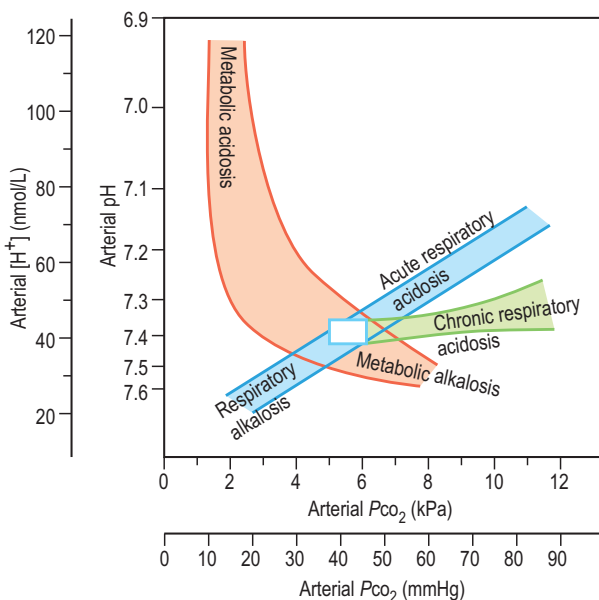
Hyperventilation results in increased removal of carbon dioxide, resulting in a fall in  $P_a\text{CO}_2$  and  $[\text{H}^+]$ .

**Table 8.8** Changes in arterial blood gases

|                  | pH                  | $P_a\text{CO}_2$  | $\text{HCO}_3^-$    |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Acidosis</b>  |                     |                   |                     |
| Metabolic        | Normal or reduced   | Normal or reduced | Reduced ++          |
| Respiratory      | Normal or reduced   | Increased ++      | Normal or increased |
| <b>Alkalosis</b> |                     |                   |                     |
| Metabolic        | Normal or increased | Increased         | Increased ++        |
| Respiratory      | Normal or increased | Reduced ++        | Reduced             |

*The pH may be at the limits of the normal range if the acidosis or alkalosis is compensated, e.g. respiratory compensation (hyperventilation) of a metabolic acidosis.*

*The clue to the abnormality from the blood gases will be the abnormal  $P_a\text{CO}_2$  and  $\text{HCO}_3^-$*



**Fig. 8.5** The Flenley acid–base nomogram.

## Metabolic acidosis

This is the result of the accumulation of any acid other than carbonic acid. The most common cause is lactic acidosis following shock or cardiac arrest.

## Clinical features

These include hyperventilation, hypotension caused by arteriolar vasodilatation and the negative inotropic effect of acidosis, and cerebral dysfunction associated with confusion and fits.

## Differential diagnosis (the anion gap)

The first step is to identify whether the acidosis is the result of retention of HCl or of another acid. This is achieved by measurement of the anion gap. The main electrolytes measured in plasma are sodium, potassium, chloride and bicarbonate. The sum of the cations, sodium and potassium normally exceeds that of chloride and bicarbonate by 6–12 mmol/L. This anion gap is usually made up of negatively charged proteins, phosphate and organic acids. If the anion gap is normal in the presence of acidosis, it can be concluded

**Table 8.9** Causes of metabolic acidosis with a normal anion gap

|  |
|--|
| <b>Increased gastrointestinal <math>\text{HCO}_3^-</math> loss</b>   |
| Diarrhoea<br>Ileostomy<br>Ureterosigmoidostomy   |
| <b>Increased <math>\text{HCO}_3^-</math> renal loss</b>  |
| Acetazolamide ingestion<br>Proximal (type 2) renal tubular acidosis<br>Hyperparathyroidism<br>Tubular damage, e.g. drugs, heavy metals |
| <b>Decreased renal <math>\text{H}^+</math> excretion</b>   |
| Distal (type 1) renal tubular acidosis<br>Type 4 renal tubular acidosis  |
| <b>Increased HCl production</b>  |
| Ammonium chloride ingestion<br>Increased catabolism of lysine, arginine  |

that HCl is being retained or  $\text{NaHCO}_3$  is being lost. The causes of a normal anion gap acidosis are given in Table 8.9.

If the anion gap is increased (i.e.  $>12$  mmol/L), the acidosis is the result of an exogenous acid, e.g. salicylates or one of the acids normally present in small unmeasured quantities, such as lactate. Causes of a high anion gap acidosis are given in Table 8.10.

### Lactic acidosis

Increased production of lactic acid occurs when cellular respiration is abnormal, resulting from either lack of oxygen (type A) or a metabolic abnormality (type B). The most common form in clinical practice is type A lactic acidosis, occurring in septicæmic or cardiogenic shock.

### Diabetic ketoacidosis

This is a high anion gap acidosis caused by the accumulation of acetoacetic and hydroxybutyric acids.

### Renal tubular acidosis

Renal tubular acidosis may occur in the absence of chronic kidney disease and is a normal anion gap acidosis. There is failure of the kidney to acidify the urine adequately. This group of disorders is uncommon and only rarely a cause of significant clinical disease. There are four types of which type 4 (also known as hyporeninaemic hypoaldosteronism) is the most common. Typical features are acidosis and hyperkalaemia occurring in the setting of mild chronic kidney disease, usually caused by tubulointerstitial disease or



**Table 8.10** Causes of metabolic acidosis with a high anion gap

|  |
|--|
| <b>Renal failure (sulphate, phosphate)</b>   |
| <b>Ketoacidosis</b>  |
| Diabetes mellitus<br>Starvation<br>Alcohol poisoning   |
| <b>Lactic acidosis</b>   |
| <i>Type A</i><br>Shock<br>Severe hypoxia<br>Methanol ingestion<br>Ethylene glycol ingestion<br>Strenuous exercise        |
| <i>Type B</i><br>Acute liver failure<br>Poisoning: ethanol, paracetamol<br>Metformin accumulation<br>Leukaemia, lymphoma |
| <b>Drug poisoning</b>  |
| Salicylates  |

diabetes. Plasma aldosterone and renin levels are low and do not respond to stimulation. Treatment is with fludrocortisone, diuretics, sodium bicarbonate and ion exchange resins for the reduction of serum potassium.

### Uraemic acidosis

Reduction of the capacity to secrete  $H^+$  and  $NH_4^+$ , in addition to bicarbonate wasting, contributes to the acidosis of chronic kidney disease. Acidosis occurs particularly when there is tubular damage, such as reflux and chronic obstructive nephropathy. It is associated with hypercalciuria and renal osteodystrophy because  $H^+$  ions are buffered by bone in exchange for calcium. Treatment is with calcium or sodium bicarbonate, although acidosis in end-stage renal failure is only usually fully corrected by adequate dialysis.

### Metabolic alkalosis

This is much less common than acidosis and is often associated with potassium or volume depletion. The main causes are persistent vomiting, diuretic therapy or hyper-aldosteronism. Vomiting causes alkalosis both by causing volume depletion and through loss of gastric acid.

## Clinical features

Cerebral dysfunction is an early feature of alkalosis. Respiration may be depressed.

## Management

This includes fluid replacement, if necessary, with replacement of sodium, potassium and chloride. The bicarbonate excess will correct itself.

## THERAPEUTICS

### Diuretics (Table 8.4)

Diuretics reduce sodium and chloride reabsorption at different sites in the nephron and thus increase urinary sodium and water loss.

#### Thiazide diuretics

##### Mechanism of action

Inhibit sodium reabsorption at beginning of distal convoluted tubule. Reduce peripheral vascular resistance (mechanism unclear).

##### Indications

In low doses to reduce blood pressure. At higher doses to relieve oedema in patients with mild chronic heart failure and good renal function.

## Preparations and dose

**Bendroflumethiazide** *Tablets: 2.5 mg, 5 mg.*

#### Oral

Hypertension: 2.5 mg each morning – higher doses rarely necessary.

Oedema: initially 5–10 mg each morning.

**Metolazone** *Tablets: 5 mg.*

**Oral** Oedema resistant to other diuretics: start at 5 mg each morning and gradually increase if necessary to 20 mg daily in resistant oedema.

## Side-effects

Postural hypotension, anorexia, diarrhoea, metabolic and electrolyte disturbances (hypokalaemia, hyponatraemia, hypomagnesaemia, hypercalcaemia, hyperlipidaemia, hyperuricaemia and gout). May aggravate diabetes mellitus. Profound diuresis with metolazone, particularly when combined with loop diuretics. Rarely bone marrow suppression, acute pancreatitis and hypersensitivity reactions.

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in symptomatic hyperuricaemia, severe renal and hepatic impairment, hyponatraemia, hypercalcaemia and untreated hypokalaemia.

## Loop diuretics

### Mechanism of action

Stimulate excretion of sodium chloride and water by blocking the sodium-potassium-chloride channel in the thick ascending limb of the loop of Henle. Also increases venous capacitance and thus produces rapid clinical improvement before the diuresis in patients with acute heart failure.

### Indications

Intravenously in patients with acute pulmonary oedema due to left heart failure. Orally, in patients with chronic heart failure and in patients with oedema associated with liver disease if aldosterone antagonists alone are ineffective. High doses may be needed with impaired renal function.

### Preparations and dose

**Furosemide** *Tablets: 20 mg, 40 mg, 500 mg; Oral solution: 20, 40, 50 mg/5 mL; Injection: 10 mg/mL.*

**Oral** For oedema, initially 40 mg in the morning, increasing if necessary to 120 mg daily.

**IV/IM** Initially 20–50 mg; doses greater than 50 mg by i.v. infusion only; max 1.5 g daily.

**Bumetanide** *Tablets: 1 mg, 5 mg; Injection: 500 µg/mL; Liquid 1 mg/5 mL.* (1 mg bumetanide = 40 mg furosemide (frusemide) at low doses.)

**Oral** Initially 1 mg (0.5 mg in the elderly) daily, increased according to response, max 5 mg daily.

**IV** 1–2 mg repeated after 20 minutes if necessary. Higher doses usually given as infusion over 30–60 minutes.

### Side-effects

Hypokalaemia, hypomagnesaemia, hyponatraemia, urate retention causing gout, hyperglycaemia, gastrointestinal disturbance, tinnitus and deafness with rapid i.v. administration or high doses, myalgia (bumetanide at high doses). Rarely bone marrow suppression, acute pancreatitis, allergic tubulointerstitial nephritis and other allergic reactions. Urinary retention with an enlarged prostate.

### Cautions/contraindications

Untreated severe electrolyte disturbance, coma due to liver failure; renal failure due to nephrotoxic drugs or anuria.

## Potassium-sparing diuretics and aldosterone antagonists

### Mechanism of action

Inhibition of sodium reabsorption in the cortical collecting tubule. Amiloride and triamterene directly decrease sodium channel activity; spironolactone inhibits aldosterone. They have weak natriuretic activity.

### Indications

Spironolactone is used in ascites and oedema associated with chronic liver disease and in low doses (25 mg) to improve survival in severe heart failure. Eplerenone is used in patients with heart failure following myocardial infarction and for management of fluid overload associated with chronic liver disease in patients intolerant of spironolactone due to gynaecomastia. Amiloride and triamterene in combination with loop diuretics are used as an alternative to giving potassium supplements and in resistant oedema.

### Preparations and dose

**Amiloride** *Tablets: 5 mg; Syrup 5 mg/5 mL.*

**Oral** 5–10 mg daily. Maximum 20 mg daily if used alone.

**Spironolactone** *Tablets: 25 mg, 50 mg, 100 mg; Suspension: 5 mg, 10 mg, 25 mg, 50 mg, 100 mg/5 mL.*

#### Oral

Heart failure: initially 25 mg daily increased to 50 mg if necessary.

Ascites in chronic liver disease: 100 mg with or without 40 mg of furosemide, increasing gradually to a maximum of 400 mg and 160 mg, respectively.

**Eplerenone** *Tablets: 25 mg.*

### Side-effects

Gastrointestinal disturbances, hyperkalaemia, hyponatraemia, gynaecomastia (spironolactone).

### Cautions/contraindications

Avoid in renal impairment and Addison's disease; co-administration with ACE inhibitors may cause hyperkalaemia.

It is preferable to prescribe thiazides and potassium-sparing diuretics separately. The use of fixed drug combinations (e.g. co-amilozide 2.5/25; amiloride hydrochloride 2.5 mg, hydrochlorothiazide 25 mg) may be justified if compliance is a problem.

## Disorders of serum potassium

### Potassium supplementation

#### Indications – potassium depletion

##### Oral potassium

**Kay-Cee-L®** Syrup: potassium chloride 7.5% (1 mmol/mL each of  $K^+$  and  $Cl^-$ ).

**Sando-K®** Effervescent tablets: potassium bicarbonate and chloride equivalent to potassium 470 mg (12 mmol of  $K^+$ ) and chloride 285 mg (8 mmol of  $Cl^-$ ).

Prevention of hypokalaemia: 25–50 mmol in divided doses.

Treatment of hypokalaemia: 40–100 mmol daily depending on serum potassium and severity of any continuing loss.

**Intravenous potassium** Injection: 20 mmol/10 mL; Infusions 10–40 mmol/L.

A variety of infusion fluids with concentrations of potassium between 10 and 40 mmol/L are available in 500 mL and 1 L size bags. Concentrations over 60 mmol/L must be infused into a large (e.g. femoral) or central vein, as high concentrations are irritant to smaller veins. Maximum rate of i.v. potassium is usually 10–20 mmol/h, although 40–100 mmol/h has been given to selected patients with paralysis or arrhythmias (with ECG monitoring).

#### Side-effects

Nausea and vomiting, oesophageal and small bowel ulceration with oral preparations; where appropriate, potassium-sparing diuretics are preferable. Cardiac arrhythmias and vein irritation with intravenous administration.

#### Cautions/contraindications

Caution in severe renal impairment and co-administration with drugs liable to raise the serum potassium, e.g. ACE inhibitors, potassium-sparing diuretics. Oral liquid preparations should be used in preference to tablets when there is any cause for delay in transit through the gastrointestinal tract.

### Ion exchange resins for potassium removal

#### Mechanism of action

The resin takes up potassium in the gut.

#### Indications

Hyperkalaemia.

## Preparations and dose

### Polystyrene sulphonate resins

**Oral** 15 g three to four times daily in water or as a paste.

**By rectum** as an enema: 30 g in methycellulose solution retained for 9 hours followed by irrigation to remove resin from the colon.

### Side-effects

Gastrointestinal disturbance (anorexia, nausea, constipation, diarrhoea), hypercalcaemia, hypomagnesaemia, rectal ulceration and colonic necrosis following rectal administration.

### Cautions/contraindications

Avoid in hypercalcaemia from any cause, caution in heart failure, hypertension, chronic kidney disease and oedema (due to salt loading).

# Renal disease

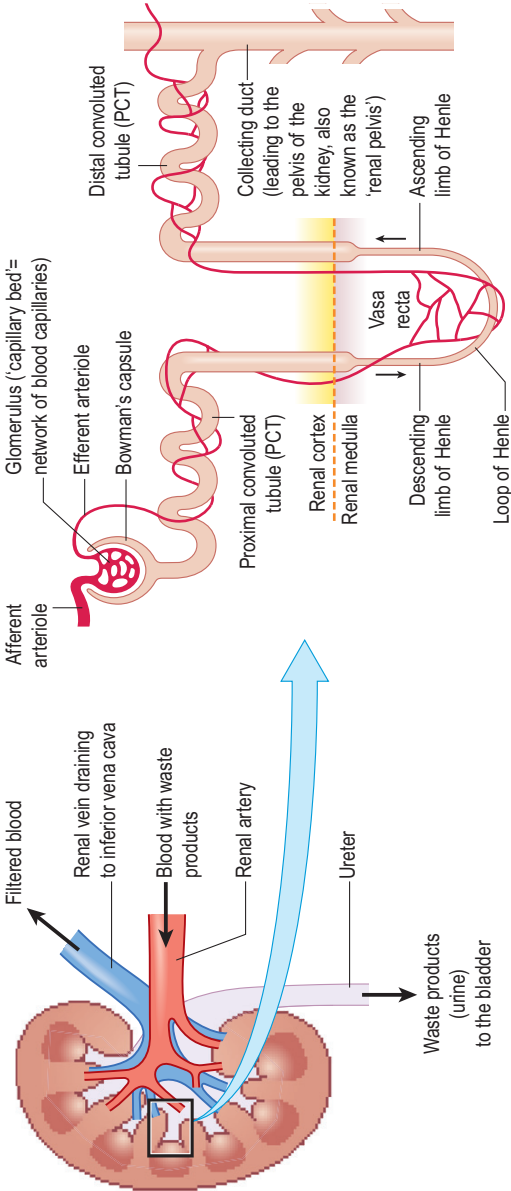
The kidneys are 11–14 cm in length and lie retroperitoneally on either side of the vertebral column from T12–L3. The functions of the kidneys are:

- Elimination of waste material
- Regulation of volume and composition of body fluid
- Endocrine function – production of erythropoietin, renin and vitamin D in its active form
- Autocrine function – production of endothelin, prostaglandins, renal natriuretic peptide.

The functional unit of the kidney is the *nephron*, which is composed of the glomerulus, proximal tubule, loop of Henle, distal tubule and collecting duct (Fig. 9.1). The renal artery (a branch of the abdominal aorta) supplies the kidney and divides many times to form *afferent arterioles* each of which supplies one of the two million nephrons. The wider diameter of the afferent compared to efferent arterioles increases the pressure of blood within the glomerulus and forces water and solutes (but not red blood cells or larger molecular weight plasma proteins) out of the glomerular capillaries into Bowman's capsule forming the *glomerular filtrate* – about 170–180 L per day. The proximal renal tubules reabsorb most of the filtered solute required to maintain fluid and electrolyte balance, but elimination of potassium, water and non-volatile hydrogen ions is regulated in the distal tubules. As renal perfusion and glomerular filtration fall, reabsorption of water and sodium by the proximal tubules increases so that minimal fluid reaches the distal tubule. Hence hypotensive or hypovolaemic patients cannot excrete potassium and hydrogen ions. Patients with distal tubular damage, e.g. caused by drugs, also cannot excrete potassium and hydrogen ions. Normally only about 1% of the original filtered volume, but containing high concentrations of urea and creatinine, passes into the renal pelvis as urine.

## PRESENTING FEATURES OF RENAL DISEASE

The most common diseases of the kidney and urinary tract are benign prostatic hypertrophy in men and urinary tract infection (UTI) in women.



**Fig. 9.1** The kidney and a nephron.



Symptoms suggesting renal tract disease are dysuria, frequency of micturition, haematuria, urinary retention and alteration of urine volume (either polyuria or oliguria). In addition there may be pain situated anywhere along the renal tract, from loin to groin. Non-specific symptoms, e.g. lethargy, anorexia and pruritus, may be the presenting features of chronic kidney disease (CKD). Renal disease may be asymptomatic and discovered by the incidental finding of hypertension, a raised serum urea, or proteinuria and haematuria on Stix testing.

## Dysuria

Dysuria (pain on micturition) is caused by:

- Inflammation involving the urethra (urethritis) or bladder (cystitis). Dysuria is common in adult women and is usually due to lower urinary tract bacterial infection (p. 370) with inflammation of the urethra and bladder. Other causes of urethritis include infection with *Chlamydia trachomatis* or *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* (p. 42).
- Inflammation involving the vagina in women or glans penis in men. Causes include infection with *Candida albicans* and *Gardnerella vaginalis*.

## Polyuria and nocturia

Polyuria is an excessive urine output of greater than 2.5–3 L in 24 hours. It must be differentiated from the more common complaints of urinary frequency and nocturia (night-time urination), which are not necessarily associated with an increase in the total urine output. Causes of polyuria include polydipsia (defined as excessive thirst leading to increased fluid intake >3 L per day), solute diuresis (e.g. hyperglycaemia with glycosuria), diabetes insipidus and CKD. Nocturia is most often due to drinking before bed or, in men over 50 years, prostatic enlargement (p. 401).

## Oliguria

Oliguria is a low urine output, and maintained over several hours indicates acute kidney injury (AKI, p. 383) or urinary tract obstruction. It may be 'physiological', as in patients with hypotension and hypovolaemia, where urine is maximally concentrated in an attempt to conserve water. Anuria (no urine) suggests bilateral ureteric or bladder outflow obstruction. Management of the oliguric patient is in three steps:

1. **Exclude obstruction.** The patient with outflow obstruction (acute retention of urine) is typically in great discomfort with an intense desire to micturate. The bladder is palpable as a tender mass that is dull to percussion, arising out of the pelvis. The diagnosis is confirmed by passing a urethral

catheter and releasing a large volume of urine. If the patient is already catheterized, the catheter should be flushed with sterile saline to relieve any blockage. Obstruction proximal to the bladder (e.g. ureteric obstruction) is often painless, and ultrasound examination is indicated to exclude pelvicalyceal dilatation.

2. *Assess for hypovolaemia.* Once obstruction is excluded clinically, the patient is assessed for evidence of hypovolaemia by measurement of blood pressure, pulse, jugular venous pressure (JVP), and urinary electrolytes (p. 385). If the patient is hypovolaemic, the urine output in response to a fluid challenge (500 mL saline 0.9% intravenously over 30 minutes) is assessed.
3. *Management of established AKI* (p. 385) once obstruction and hypovolaemia have been excluded.

## Haematuria

See urine dipstick testing (p. 357).

## Pain

Loin/flank pain occurs in kidney infections (acute pyelonephritis), upper urinary tract obstruction and occlusion of the renal artery due to either thrombosis in situ or emboli. Chronic renal pain occurs in cystic renal disease and renal tumours. Acute severe pain radiating from the flank to the iliac fossa and testes or labium is typical of ureteric colic due to a calculus.

## INVESTIGATION OF RENAL DISEASE

Once renal disease is suspected, the purpose of investigation is to determine the cause and the presence or degree of renal dysfunction. Estimation of the glomerular filtration rate (eGFR, see below) is used to determine the degree of renal dysfunction. The clinical history and examination together with urine dipstick testing and microscopy of urine are the starting points for determining the cause.

## Blood tests

The serum urea or creatinine concentration represents the dynamic equilibrium between production and elimination but levels do not rise above the normal range until there is a reduction of 50–60% in the GFR. The serum urea concentration is increased by a high-protein diet, increased tissue catabolism (surgery, trauma, infection) and gastrointestinal bleeding, whereas the level of creatinine is much less dependent on diet but is more related to age, sex and muscle mass. Once it is elevated, serum creatinine is a better

guide to GFR than urea, although a normal level is not synonymous with a normal GFR.

## Glomerular filtration rate

Measurement of the GFR is the best indicator of kidney function. Creatinine clearance is a reasonably accurate measure of GFR and is calculated using a 24-hour urine collection and a single plasma creatinine. In clinical practice the eGFR is calculated using formulae based on serum creatinine and demographics e.g. the Cockcroft–Gault equation.

### Calculation of creatinine clearance using the Cockcroft–Gault equation

#### Men

$$\text{Creatinine clearance} = \frac{1.23 \times (140 - \text{Age}) \times (\text{Weight in kg})}{\text{Serum creatinine } (\mu\text{mol/L})}$$

**Women** Use the same equation but multiply by 1.04 instead of 1.23.

The modification of diet in renal disease (MDRD) is more reliable than the Cockcroft–Gault equation in ethnically diverse groups of individuals ([www.nephron.com/MDRD\\_GFR.cgi](http://www.nephron.com/MDRD_GFR.cgi)). Neither are validated in AKI and pregnancy. An eGFR < 60 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup> body surface area for more than 3 months indicates CKD.

## Urine dipstick testing

Urine dipstick testing detects the presence of blood, protein, glucose, ketones, bilirubin and urobilinogen in the urine and provides a semiquantitative assessment of the amount of substance present. Dipsticks can also be used to measure urine pH, which is useful in the investigation and management of renal tubular acidosis (p. 346). Each test is based on a colour change in a strip of absorbent cellulose impregnated with the appropriate reagent. The stick is dipped briefly into a fresh specimen of urine collected in a clean container and the colour changes compared with the manufacturer's colour charts on the reagent strip container. Haematuria or proteinuria suggests renal tract disease. Dipsticks are also available for testing for urinary nitrites and leucocyte elastase to identify UTIs (p. 370).

### Proteinuria

This is an excess of protein in the urine. Under normal conditions the low molecular weight proteins and albumin that are filtered by the glomerulus are almost completely reabsorbed in the proximal renal tubule. This results in a normal urinary protein excretion of less than 150 mg/day of which only a small amount is albumin (<30 mg daily). Dipsticks are albumin specific and

**Table 9.1** Causes of proteinuria

| Type           | Mechanism                          | Examples  |
|----------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Glomerular     | Increased permeability             | Glomerulopathies  |
| Tubular*       | Decreased reabsorption             | Fanconi's syndrome<br>Tubulointerstitial disorders            |
| Overflow       | Plasma proteins produced in excess | Multiple myeloma<br>Monoclonal gammopathy                     |
| Physiological† | Increased renal haemodynamics      | Acute illness<br>Fever<br>Intense activity<br>Upright posture |

\*Usually <1 g per day and may be associated with other defects of proximal tubular function (e.g. glucosuria, phosphaturia, aminoaciduria).

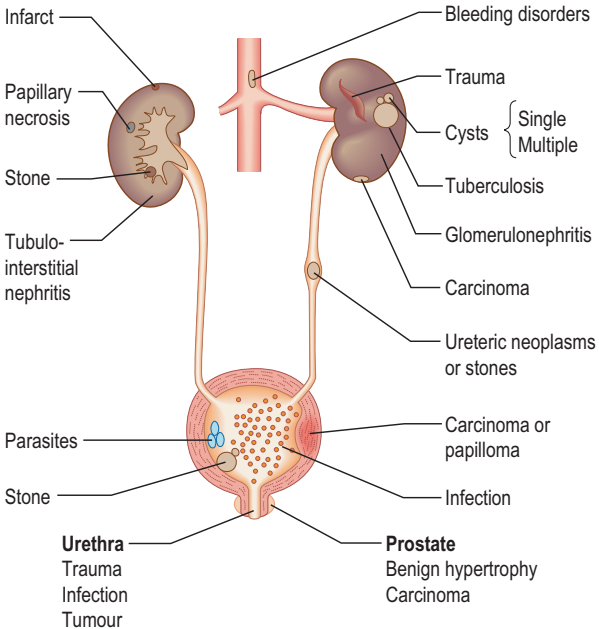
†Mild proteinuria and not associated with underlying renal disease. Diagnosis is made by the absence of proteinuria on subsequent urine examinations when the condition, e.g. fever, resolves.

will detect albumin once urine levels exceed 200 mg/L (300 mg daily if urine volume is normal). Dipsticks do not detect abnormal proteins such as globulins and Bence Jones protein (immunoglobulin light chains) excreted in multiple myeloma. The causes of proteinuria are listed in Table 9.1. Persistent proteinuria detected on dipstick testing requires full investigation and should be quantified and renal excretory function determined (by measurement of eGFR). Quantification of proteinuria is by measurement of protein and/or albumin concentration in a 'spot' urine sample (ideally an early morning specimen) and normalizing to creatinine concentration to give a urine protein to urine creatinine ratio (PCR) or the more sensitive urine albumin to urine creatinine ratio (ACR). Normal protein excretion is less than 150 mg per day (PCR < 15 mg/mmol) and nephrotic range proteinuria (p. 365) is more than 3.5 g per day (PCR > 350 mg/mmol).

*Microalbuminuria* is an increase above the normal range in urinary albumin excretion that is undetectable by conventional dipsticks (i.e. 30–300 mg/day). It is an early indicator of renal disease and is widely used as a predictor of the development of nephropathy in people with diabetes. An ACR of >2.5 mg/mmol in men and >3.5 mg/mmol in women indicates microalbuminuria. Albumin excretion above 300 mg/day is overt proteinuria.

## Haematuria

Haematuria is blood in the urine and is either visible (also called macroscopic or gross) or non-visible (also called microscopic), detected on urine dipstick (positive 1+ or greater).

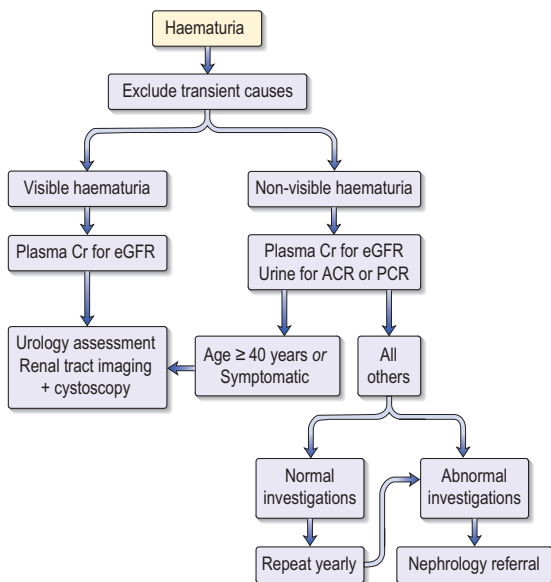


**Fig. 9.2** Sites and causes of bleeding from the urinary tract.

Haematuria can arise from several sites in the kidney or urinary tract (Fig. 9.2).

- Blood only apparent at the start of micturition is usually due to urethral disease.
- Blood at the end of micturition suggests bleeding from the prostate or bladder base.
- Blood seen as an even discoloration throughout the urine suggests bleeding from a source in the bladder or above.

Fig. 9.3 outlines an algorithm for the investigation of haematuria. Patients should be evaluated regardless of anticoagulant or antiplatelet therapy. Transient causes such as urinary tract infection and contamination during menstruation are excluded by repeat testing. Urinary tract malignancy is more likely in patients with visible haematuria, urinary tract symptoms or those over 40 years of age; thus urological referral is usually indicated initially for appropriate imaging of the urinary tract (either ultrasound or computed



Cr, creatinine; eGFR, estimated glomerular filtration rate; ACR (PCR), albumin (protein): creatinine ratio

**Fig. 9.3** Decision algorithm for the investigation of haematuria. Cr, creatinine; eGFR, estimated glomerular filtration rate; ACR (PCR), albumin (protein): creatinine ratio.

tomography [CT]) and cystoscopy. All other patients are more likely to have glomerular disease (often IgA nephropathy) and nephrology referral is indicated if initial or subsequent testing of renal function is abnormal.

## Glycosuria

Diabetes mellitus must be excluded in any patients with a positive dipstick test for glucose.

## Urine microscopy

This is performed on a fresh, clean-catch, mid-stream urine specimen in all patients suspected of having renal disease.

## White cells

Ten or more white cells per cubic millimetre in fresh, unspun, mid-stream urine is abnormal, and indicates an inflammatory reaction within the urinary

tract, usually a UTI. Sterile pyuria (i.e. pus cells without bacterial infection) occurs in a partially treated UTI, urinary tract tuberculosis, calculi, bladder tumour, papillary necrosis and tubulointerstitial nephritis.

## Red cells

One or more red cells per cubic millimetre is abnormal and must be investigated (see haematuria).

## Casts

Mucoprotein precipitated in the renal tubules results in the formation of hyaline casts, which on their own are a normal finding. The incorporation of red cells results in red cell casts, a finding pathognomonic of glomerulonephritis. White cell casts may be seen in acute pyelonephritis. Granular casts result from the disintegration of cellular debris and indicate glomerular or tubular disease.

## Bacteria

Greater than  $10^5$  or  $10^3$  pathogenic organisms per mL of urine in a fresh midstream specimen in a symptomatic woman or man respectively indicates a UTI. In a woman, the diagnosis is also made with  $10^2$  coliform organisms per mL in the presence of pyuria ( $>10$  white cells/ $\text{mm}^3$ ). Any growth of pathogenic organisms in urine by suprapubic aspiration is diagnostic of a UTI.

## Imaging techniques

**Plain X-ray** is useful to identify renal calcification or radiodense calculi in the kidney, renal pelvis, line of the ureters or bladder.

**Ultrasonography** of the kidneys is the method of choice for assessing renal size, checking for pelvicalyceal dilatation as an indication of chronic renal obstruction, characterizing renal masses, diagnosing polycystic kidney disease, and detecting intrarenal and/or perinephric fluid (e.g. pus, blood). It has the advantage over X-ray techniques of avoiding ionizing radiation and the use of an intravascular contrast medium. Doppler ultrasonography is used to demonstrate renal artery perfusion and detect renal vein thrombosis. Bladder wall thickening can be detected in a distended bladder and an assessment of bladder emptying made by scanning after voiding.

**CT** is used as a first-line investigation in cases of suspected ureteric colic. It is also used to characterize renal masses that are indeterminate at ultrasonography, to stage renal, bladder and prostate tumours, and to detect 'lucent' calculi; low-density calculi which are lucent on plain films (e.g. uric acid stones) are well seen on CT. It is also used to look for retroperitoneal disease such as tumours and fibrosis, and CT angiography is used to visualize the renal arteries and veins.

**Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)** is used to characterize renal masses as an alternative to CT, to stage renal, prostate and bladder cancer and also to image the renal arteries by MR angiography with gadolinium as contrast medium. In experienced hands, its sensitivity and specificity approaches renal angiography.

**Excretion urography** (also known as IVU or intravenous pyelography, IVP) has largely been replaced by ultrasonography and CT scanning.

**Renal arteriography (angiography)** is used in the diagnosis of renal artery disease but MR and spiral CT angiography are being used increasingly. The technique requires cannulation of the femoral artery and injection of a contrast medium. Complications include cholesterol embolizations and contrast-induced kidney damage.

**Antegrade pyelography** involves percutaneous puncture of a pelvicalyceal system with a needle and the injection of contrast medium to outline the pelvicalyceal system and ureter to the level of obstruction. It is used when ultrasonography has shown a dilated pelvicalyceal system in a patient with suspected obstruction. A catheter can then be placed percutaneously to drain the obstructed system (percutaneous nephrostomy) or a ureteric stent placed to relieve the obstruction.

**Retrograde pyelography** Following cystoscopy (endoscopic visualization of the bladder), contrast medium is introduced into the ureters via a catheter. Retrograde pyelography is used to investigate lesions of the ureter and to define the lower level of ureteral obstruction shown on other imaging studies. There is a small risk of introducing infection.

**Renal scintigraphy** Renal scintigraphy involves the intravenous injection of a radiopharmaceutical (e.g. diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid [DTPA] labelled with technetium-99m) which is extracted from the bloodstream by the kidneys and subsequent imaging on a gamma camera with computer acquisition. It is used to detect anatomical or functional abnormalities of the kidneys or urinary tract. *Dynamic renal scintigraphy* is used to assess renal blood flow in suspected renal artery stenosis, renal function in obstruction, and in detection of vesicoureteric reflux. *Static renal scintigraphy* enables assessment of the size and position of the kidneys, differential function of each kidney and parenchymal defects (scars, ischaemic areas, tumours).

## Transcutaneous renal biopsy

Renal biopsy is carried out under ultrasound control. Microscopy is helpful in the investigation of the nephritic and nephrotic syndromes, AKI and CKD, haematuria after negative urological investigations and renal graft dysfunction. Complications include haematuria, flank pain and perirenal haematoma formation.



## GLOMERULAR DISEASES

### Normal glomerular structure

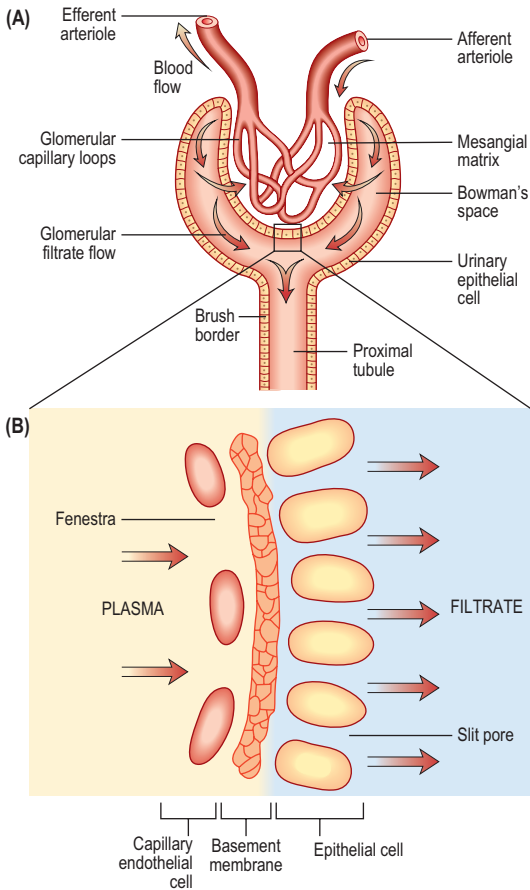
There are about one million renal glomeruli in each kidney and each consists of a capillary plexus invaginating the blind end of the proximal renal tubule (Fig. 9.4). The glomerular capillaries are lined by a fenestrated endothelium, which rests on the glomerular basement membrane (GBM). External to the GBM are the visceral epithelial cells (podocytes) which only make contact with the GBM by finger-like projections, called foot processes, which are separated from one another by 'filtration pores'. This unique structure of the glomerular membrane accounts for its tremendous permeability, allowing 125–200 mL of glomerular filtrate to be formed every minute (this is the glomerular filtration rate or GFR). The composition of the glomerular filtrate is similar to plasma but contains only small amounts of protein (all of low molecular weight), most of which is reabsorbed in the proximal tubule. Tubular reabsorption and secretion normally substantially alter the water and electrolyte composition of the glomerular filtrate until it reaches the renal pelvis as urine.

### Pathogenesis and terms in glomerular disease

Glomerular disease includes *glomerulonephritis*, i.e. inflammation of the glomeruli, and *glomerulopathies*, i.e. when there is no evidence of inflammation. There is an overlap between these terms. The kidneys are symmetrically involved and the renal lesion may be primary or part of a generalized disease, e.g. systemic lupus erythematosus.

Renal tissue, obtained at transcutaneous renal biopsy, is examined by light microscopy, electron microscopy and immunofluorescence to determine the extent and type of disease and to assess the type of immunological injury. The most commonly used terms are:

- *Focal*: Some but not all the glomeruli contain the lesion.
- *Diffuse* (global): Most of the glomeruli contain the lesion.
- *Segmental*: Only a part of the glomerulus is affected (most focal lesions are also segmental, e.g. focal segmental glomerulosclerosis).
- *Proliferative*: An increase in cell numbers due to hyperplasia of one or more of the resident glomerular cells with or without inflammation.
- *Membrane alterations*: Capillary wall thickening due to deposition of immune deposits or alterations in basement membrane.
- *Crescent formation*: Epithelial cell proliferation with mononuclear cell infiltration in Bowman's space.



**Fig. 9.4** (A) Diagrammatic representation of the normal glomerulus. (B) Components of the glomerular membrane. (Adapted from Read et al. 1993 *Essential Medicine*. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh; Guyton 1987 *Human Physiology and Mechanisms of Disease*, 4th edn. WB Saunders, London.)

## Classification and presentation of glomerulopathies

The presence of some form of glomerular disease, as opposed to tubulointerstitial or vascular disease, is usually suspected from the history and from one or more of the following urinary findings: haematuria (particularly if the red cells are abnormally shaped or distorted, i.e. dysmorphic), red cell casts and

proteinuria, which may be in the nephrotic range ( $>3.5$  g/day). Glomerulopathies are classified and discussed as they relate to four major glomerular syndromes:

- *Nephrotic syndrome*: Massive proteinuria ( $>3.5$  g/day), hypoalbuminaemia, oedema, lipiduria and hyperlipidaemia.
- *Acute glomerulonephritis (acute nephritic syndrome)*: Abrupt onset of haematuria with casts or dysmorphic red cells, non-nephrotic range proteinuria, oedema, hypertension and transient renal impairment.
- *Rapidly progressive glomerulonephritis*: Features of acute nephritis, focal necrosis with or without crescents and rapidly progressive renal failure over weeks.
- *Asymptomatic haematuria, proteinuria* (or both): These are usually incidental findings on urinary dipstick testing and may be an early indicator of renal disease. The causes and further investigation are discussed in the sections on haematuria (p. 358) and proteinuria (p. 357).

## NEPHROTIC SYNDROME

There is massively increased filtration of macromolecules across the glomerular capillary wall due to structural and functional abnormalities of the glomerular podocytes.

- *Hypoalbuminaemia* (serum albumin  $<30$  g/L) develops as a consequence of heavy *proteinuria* ( $>3.5$  g/24 h in adults) and increased renal catabolism of filtered protein.
- *Oedema* is primarily due to sodium retention in the renal collecting tubules together with an increase in capillary permeability. A reduction in effective circulating volume also leads to oedema through similar mechanisms that occur in cardiac failure and cirrhosis (p. 166).
- *Hypercholesterolaemia* and *hypertriglyceridaemia* are common in nephrotic syndrome due to increased synthesis and impaired catabolism.

## Aetiology

### Nephrotic syndrome with 'bland' urine sediments

Membranous nephropathy and focal segmental glomerulosclerosis are the most common causes in adults and minimal-change nephropathy in children (Table 9.2). Membranous nephropathy is usually idiopathic but may occur in association with drugs (e.g. penicillamine, gold, NSAIDs), autoimmune disease (e.g. systemic lupus erythematosus [SLE], thyroiditis), neoplasia (carcinoma of lung, colon, stomach, breast and lymphoma), infections (e.g. hepatitis B and C, schistosomiasis and *Plasmodium malariae*) and other causes (sarcoidosis, sickle cell disease). There is deposition of IgG and complement C3 along the outer aspect of the glomerular basement membrane. Expansion of the basement membrane appears with time as the deposits are surrounded

**Table 9.2** Glomerulopathies associated with the nephrotic syndrome**Nephrotic syndrome with 'bland' urine sediments**

Primary glomerular disease  
 Minimal-change glomerular disease  
 Membranous nephropathy  
 Focal segmental glomerulosclerosis  
 Congenital nephrotic syndrome  
 Secondary glomerular disease  
 Amyloidosis  
 Diabetic nephropathy

**Nephrotic syndrome with 'active' urine sediments (mixed nephrotic/nephritic)**

Primary glomerular disease  
 Mesangiocapillary glomerulonephritis  
 Mesangial proliferative glomerulonephritis  
 Secondary glomerular disease  
 Systemic lupus erythematosus  
 Cryoglobulinaemic disease  
 Henoch–Schönlein syndrome  
 Idiopathic fibrillary glomerulopathy  
 Immunotactoid glomerulopathy  
 Fibronectin glomerulopathy

by basement membrane and eventually undergo resorption. Focal segmental glomerulosclerosis is of unknown aetiology and is a particular common cause of nephrotic syndrome in black adults. A similar histological type occurs in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection.

Minimal-change nephropathy occurs most commonly in boys under 5 years of age. It accounts for 90% of cases of nephrotic syndrome in children and 20–25% in adults. The pathogenesis is unknown; immune complexes are absent on immunofluorescence but the increase in glomerular permeability is thought to be immunologically mediated in some way. The glomeruli appear normal on light microscopy. On electron microscopy there is fusion of the foot processes of epithelial cells (podocytes) – a non-specific finding.

Nephrotic syndrome associated with renal amyloid (p. 697) and diabetes mellitus (p. 684) is not immune mediated. Other renal diseases, e.g. polycystic kidneys, reflux nephropathy may cause proteinuria, but are rarely severe enough to cause the nephrotic syndrome.

### Nephrotic syndrome with 'active' urine sediments (mixed nephrotic/nephritic)

*Mesangiocapillary* (membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis) occurs with chronic infection (abscesses, infective endocarditis, infected ventriculo-

peritoneal shunt), cryoglobulinaemia secondary to hepatitis C infection or may be idiopathic. A different type occurs with partial lipodystrophy (loss of subcutaneous fat on the face and upper trunk). Most patients develop renal failure over several years. Mesangial proliferative glomerulonephritis presents with heavy proteinuria with minimal changes on light microscopy. There are deposits in the glomerular mesangium of IgM and complement (IgM nephropathy) or C1<sub>q</sub> (C1<sub>q</sub> nephropathy). Some patients respond to steroids and some will progress to renal failure.

## Clinical features

Oedema of the ankles, genitals and abdominal wall is the principal finding. The face (periorbital oedema) and arms may also be involved in severe cases.

## Differential diagnoses

Nephrotic syndrome must be differentiated from other causes of oedema and hypoalbuminaemia. In congestive cardiac failure (p. 435) there is oedema and raised JVP. In nephrotic syndrome the JVP is normal or low unless there is concomitant renal failure and oliguria. Hypoalbuminaemia and oedema occur in cirrhosis, but there are usually signs of chronic liver disease on examination (p. 144).

## Investigations

Investigations are indicated to make the diagnosis, monitor progress and determine the underlying aetiology (Table 9.3).

## Management

**General oedema** is treated with dietary salt restriction and a thiazide diuretic, e.g. bendroflumethiazide 5 mg daily (p. 348) followed by furosemide (frusemide) and amiloride for unresponsive patients. Intravenous diuretics and occasionally intravenous salt-poor albumin are required to initiate a diuresis which, once established, can usually be maintained with oral diuretics alone. Proteinuria is reduced by administration of angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors or angiotensin II receptor antagonists; patients should be advised to eat a normal rather than high protein diet, which increases proteinuria. Prolonged bed rest should be avoided and long-term prophylactic anticoagulation given in view of the thrombotic tendency (see complications). Infections are treated aggressively and patients should be offered influenza and pneumococcal vaccination (p. 534).

**Specific treatment** Treatment of the underlying disease, e.g. SLE, or cessation of the offending drug, e.g. penicillamine, is usually associated with improvement in secondary glomerulopathy. Only selected patients with moderate or severe progressive idiopathic membranous nephropathy should receive specific treatment as there is a high rate of spontaneous

**Table 9.3** Investigations indicated in glomerular disease

| Investigations  | Significance  |
|---|---|
| <b>Baseline measurements</b>  |   |
| Estimated glomerular filtration rate  | } To determine current status, monitor progress and response to treatment |
| Urinary protein   |   |
| Serum urea and electrolytes   |   |
| Serum albumin   |   |
| <b>Diagnostically useful tests</b>  |   |
| Urine microscopy  | Red cell casts indicate glomerulonephritis                                |
| Culture (swab from throat or infected skin)   | } Diagnosis of recent streptococcal infection                             |
| Serum antistreptolysin-O titre  |   |
| Blood glucose   | Diagnosis of diabetes mellitus  |
| Serum tests:  |   |
| Antinuclear and anti-DNA antibodies   | Present in significant titre in SLE                                       |
| ANCA  | Positive in vasculitis  |
| Anti-GBM antibody   | Present in anti-GBM glomerulonephritis                                    |
| Hepatitis B surface antigen   | Hepatitis B infection   |
| Hepatitis C antibody  | Hepatitis C infection   |
| HIV antibody  | HIV infection   |
| Cryoglobulins   | Increased in cryoglobulinaemia  |
| Chest X-ray   | Cavities in Wegener's granulomatosis, malignancy                          |
| Ultrasound of kidneys   | Renal size, to look for renal vein thrombosis                             |
| Renal biopsy  | Diagnosis of any glomerulopathy   |
| <i>SLE, systemic lupus erythematosus; ANCA, anti-neutrophil cytoplasmic antibody; GBM, glomerular basement membrane; HIV, human immunodeficiency virus.</i> |   |

improvement. Treatment is with cyclophosphamide or chlorambucil with prednisolone. Rituximab (p. 254) is used in resistant disease. Minimal-change nephropathy is almost always steroid responsive in children, although less commonly in adults. High-dose prednisolone therapy (60 mg/m<sup>2</sup>/day) is given for 4–6 weeks and then tapered down slowly. Further courses are given if the patient has a relapse. In patients with frequent relapses and in steroid-unresponsive patients, immunosuppressive therapy with cyclophosphamide or ciclosporin is used.

## Complications

- *Venous thrombosis.* Loss of clotting factors in the urine predispose to thrombus formation in both peripheral and renal veins. The latter presents with renal pain, haematuria and deterioration in renal function and is diagnosed by ultrasonography.
- *Sepsis.* Loss of immunoglobulin in the urine increases susceptibility to infection, which is a cause of death in these patients.
- *AKI* is rarely the result of progression of the underlying renal disease and more often a consequence of hypovolaemia (particularly after diuretic therapy) or renal vein thrombosis.

## Acute glomerulonephritis (acute nephritic syndrome)

Acute nephritic syndrome is often caused by an immune response triggered by an infection or other disease (Table 9.4). The typical case of post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis develops in a child 1–3 weeks after a streptococcal infection (pharyngitis or cellulitis) with a Lancefield group A  $\beta$ -haemolytic streptococcus. The bacterial antigen becomes trapped in the glomerulus, leading to an acute diffuse proliferative glomerulonephritis.

## Clinical features

The syndrome comprises:

- Haematuria (visible or non-visible) – red cell casts are typically seen in urine microscopy
- Proteinuria (usually <2 g in 24 hours)
- Hypertension and oedema (periorbital, leg or sacral) caused by salt and water retention

**Table 9.4** Diseases commonly associated with the acute nephritic syndrome

|   |
|---|
| Post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis   |
| Non-streptococcal post-infectious glomerulonephritis, e.g. <i>Staphylococcus</i> , mumps, <i>Legionella</i> , hepatitis B and C, schistosomiasis, malaria |
| Infective endocarditis  |
| Shunt nephritis   |
| Visceral abscess  |
| Systemic lupus erythematosus  |
| Henoch–Schönlein syndrome   |
| Cryoglobulinaemia   |

- Oliguria
- Uraemia.

## Investigations

The history and examination will help to assess the severity of the illness and to determine any associated underlying conditions. Investigations performed in the nephritic syndrome are listed in Table 9.3. If the clinical diagnosis of a nephritic illness is clear-cut, e.g. in poststreptococcal glomerulonephritis, renal ultrasonography and renal biopsy are usually unnecessary.

## Management

Post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis usually has a good prognosis, and supportive measures are often all that is required until spontaneous recovery takes place. Hypertension is treated with salt restriction, loop diuretics and vasodilators. Fluid balance is monitored by daily weighing and daily recording of fluid input and output. In oliguric patients with evidence of fluid overload (e.g. oedema, pulmonary congestion and severe hypertension) fluid restriction is necessary. The management of life-threatening complications such as hypertensive encephalopathy (see p. 482), pulmonary oedema (p. 443) and severe uraemia (p. 389) are discussed in the appropriate chapters. In glomerulonephritis complicating SLE or the systemic vasculitides (see below), immunosuppression with prednisolone, cyclophosphamide or azathioprine improves renal function.

### Rapidly progressive glomerulonephritis

There are three main causes: on a background of acute nephritic syndrome (see above), anti-glomerular basement membrane disease (which with lung involvement is called Goodpasture's syndrome, p. 552) and antineutrophilic cytoplasmic antibody (ANCA)-associated vasculitis (p. 307). Investigations are listed in Table 9.3 and the management is based on general treatment of AKI (p. 383) and specific treatment directed against the causes.

## URINARY TRACT INFECTION

UTI is common in women, with about 35% having symptoms of a UTI at some time in their life. It is uncommon in children and in men, when it usually indicates an underlying urinary tract abnormality. Infections of the bladder (*cystitis*) can occur alone or associated with ascending infection of the ureters and renal parenchyma (*pyelonephritis*).

## Pathogenesis

Infection of the urinary tract is most often via the ascending transurethral route, and this is facilitated by sexual intercourse and urethral catheterization.



Women are more susceptible to infection because the short urethra and its proximity to the anus facilitates the transfer of bowel organisms to the bladder. *Escherichia coli* is the most common cause of UTI and usually arises from the patient's own bowel flora (Table 9.5).

Abnormalities that encourage bladder infection (*cystitis*) include:

- Urinary obstruction or stasis
- Previous damage to the bladder epithelium
- Bladder stones
- Poor bladder emptying.

## Clinical features

The symptoms of *lower UTI* are frequency of micturition, dysuria, suprapubic pain and tenderness, haematuria and smelly urine. The clinical features of *acute pyelonephritis* are loin pain and tenderness, nausea, vomiting and fever. However, localization of infection on the basis of symptoms alone is unreliable. In elderly people the symptoms may be atypical, with incontinence, nocturia or just a vague change in well-being.

## Natural history

**Uncomplicated versus complicated infection** *Uncomplicated infection* refers to UTI in an otherwise healthy non-pregnant woman with a functionally normal urinary tract and will rarely result in serious kidney damage. *Complicated infection* refers to infection in patients with abnormal urinary tracts (e.g. stones, obstruction) or systemic disease involving the kidney (e.g. diabetes mellitus, sickle cell disease/trait). They are more likely to fail treatment and develop complications which include renal papillary necrosis (p. 382) and the development of a renal or perinephric abscess with the risk of Gram-negative septicaemia. Most UTIs in men are also considered as complicated

**Table 9.5** Organisms causing urinary tract infection in domiciliary practice

| Organism   | Approximate frequency (%) |
|--|---------------------------|
| <i>Escherichia coli</i> and other 'coliforms'                      | 68+                       |
| <i>Proteus mirabilis</i>   | 12                        |
| <i>Klebsiella aerogenes</i> *                                      | 4                         |
| <i>Enterococcus faecalis</i> *                                     | 6                         |
| <i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i> or <i>Staph. epidermidis</i> † | 10                        |

\*More common in hospital practice.

†More common in women.

since they are often associated with urological abnormalities such as bladder outlet obstruction in elderly men.

**Acute pyelonephritis** is associated with neutrophil infiltration of the renal parenchyma; small cortical abscesses and streaks of pus in the renal medulla are often present. There may be an acute deterioration in renal function but significant permanent kidney damage in adults with normal renal tracts is rare.

**Reflux nephropathy** (previously called chronic pyelonephritis or atrophic pyelonephritis) arises from childhood UTIs in combination with vesicoureteric reflux leading to progressive renal scarring and presenting as hypertension or CKD in childhood and adult life. Vesicoureteric reflux refers to an incompetent valve between bladder and ureter, allowing reflux of urine up the ureter during bladder contraction and voiding. Reflux usually ceases around puberty but by that time the damage is done.

**Recurrent UTI** with the same or different organism more than 2 weeks after stopping antibiotic treatment is considered to be *reinfection*, whilst *relapse* is diagnosed by recurrence of bacteriuria with the same organism within 7 days of completion of treatment. Relapse implies failure to eradicate the organism usually in association with anatomical renal tract abnormality e.g. polycystic kidneys.

## Investigations

The diagnosis of acute cystitis and pyelonephritis is made on the history, physical examination and urine testing.

- Dipsticks detect the presence of urinary nitrites (bacteria breakdown nitrates to release nitrites) and leucocyte elastase. Pyuria is present in most patients with UTIs but false-negative results occur for nitrites. Dipstick tests positive for both nitrite and elastase are highly predictive of acute infection.
- Urine microscopy and culture and antimicrobial susceptibility testing of pathogens. This is unnecessary in most women presenting with symptoms suggestive of cystitis (in whom treatment is given based on symptoms and dipstick testing). Criteria for diagnosis of a UTI are listed on page 361. Mixed growths are of uncertain significance and the test should be repeated. Rarely and if in doubt, urine must be obtained by suprapubic bladder aspiration, where any growth of a uropathogenic organism is evidence of infection.
- Routine renal tract imaging of young women with UTI has a low diagnostic yield and is not indicated. Women with uncomplicated pyelonephritis who have persistent fever or clinical symptoms after 48–72 hours of appropriate antibiotic treatment require renal tract imaging to look for an abscess that requires drainage. Women with recurrent UTIs and all patients with complicated UTIs (see above) also require renal imaging. Contrast-

enhanced CT scan gives greater anatomical detail of the renal parenchyma and the perirenal areas than other imaging methods.

## Management

Pre-treatment urine culture is desirable. In patients with an indwelling urinary catheter, antibiotic treatment is indicated only in the presence of symptoms, and should be accompanied by replacement of the catheter.

**Antibiotics** A 3- to 5-day course of oral amoxicillin (250 mg three times daily), nitrofurantoin (50 mg three times daily) or trimethoprim (200 mg twice daily) is usually effective. The treatment regimen is modified in light of the result of urine culture and sensitivity testing and the clinical response. Intravenous antibiotics are indicated initially for patients with a high fever and a diagnosis of acute pyelonephritis. Oral treatment for a further 7 days is given once there is clinical improvement.

**A high fluid intake** (2 L daily) is advised during treatment and for some weeks afterwards.

**Recurrent infection** In patients with a *relapse* of infection a search should be made for an underlying cause and treatment of the cause if possible, e.g. removal of stones. In addition, intensive (1 week intravenous) or prolonged (6 weeks oral) antibiotics are required. *Reinfection* where there is usually no underlying renal tract abnormality is managed initially with lifestyle advice (2 L daily fluid intake), voiding before bedtime and after intercourse, and avoidance of spermicidal jellies and constipation.

## UTI in pregnancy

Approximately 6% of pregnant women have significant bacteriuria in pregnancy; if untreated, 20% of these will develop acute pyelonephritis with significant risk to both mother and fetus (e.g. septic shock, low birthweight and prematurity). Early detection of asymptomatic bacteriuria and antibiotic treatment is necessary.

## Abacteriuric frequency or dysuria ('urethral syndrome')

This occurs in women and presents with dysuria and frequency but in the absence of bacteriuria. It may be associated with vaginitis in post-menopausal women, irritant chemicals (e.g. soaps) and sexual intercourse.

## Tuberculosis of the urinary tract

Presentation is with symptoms of a UTI, i.e. dysuria, frequency or haematuria, and should be particularly considered in the Asian immigrant population of the UK and in countries with a high prevalence of tuberculosis. Classically,

there is sterile pyuria (p. 361). Diagnosis depends on culture of mycobacteria from early-morning urine samples. Treatment is as for pulmonary tuberculosis (p. 544).

## TUBULOINTERSTITIAL NEPHRITIS

Tubulointerstitial nephritis is primary injury to the renal tubules and interstitium resulting in decreased renal function. It is a feature of bacterial pyelonephritis but in this context it rarely, if ever, leads to renal damage in the absence of reflux, obstruction or other complicating factors.

### Acute tubulointerstitial nephritis (TIN)

Most cases of acute TIN are due to an allergic drug reaction, most commonly drugs of the penicillin family and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Infections (e.g. streptococci) are a less common cause. Patients present with fever, eosinophilia and eosinophiluria, normal or only mildly increased urine protein excretion (<1 g/day) and AKI. Renal biopsy shows an intense interstitial cellular infiltrate and variable tubular necrosis. Management involves withdrawal of the offending drug, treatment of any underlying infection and treatment of AKI (p. 385). High-dose prednisolone therapy is often used, although its value has not been proven. The prognosis is generally good; patients should avoid further exposure to the offending drug.

### Chronic tubulointerstitial nephritis

There are many causes of chronic TIN including prolonged consumption of large amounts of analgesics, particularly NSAIDs ('analgesic nephropathy'), diabetes mellitus and toxins, e.g. lead. Presentation is usually with polyuria, proteinuria (usually <1 g/day) or uraemia. Polyuria and nocturia are the result of tubular damage in the medullary area of the kidney, leading to defects in the renal concentrating ability. Necrosis of the papillae, which may subsequently slough off and be passed in the urine, sometimes causes ureteric colic or acute ureteral obstruction. Management is largely supportive. In cases of analgesic nephropathy the drug should be stopped and replaced if necessary with paracetamol or dihydrocodeine.

## HYPERTENSION AND THE KIDNEY

Hypertension can be the cause or the result of renal disease (renal hypertension), and it is often difficult to differentiate between the two on clinical grounds. Investigations, as described on page 482, should be performed on all patients, although renal imaging is usually unnecessary.

## Essential hypertension

Hypertension leads to characteristic histological changes in the renal vessels and intrarenal vasculature over time. These include intimal thickening with reduplication of the elastic lamina, reduction in kidney size, and an increase in the proportion of sclerotic glomeruli. The changes are usually accompanied by some deterioration in renal function, which is much more common in black Africans.

*Accelerated or malignant-phase hypertension* is marked by the development of fibrinoid necrosis in afferent glomerular arterioles and fibrin deposition in arteriolar walls. A rapid rise in blood pressure may trigger these arteriolar lesions, and a vicious circle is then established whereby fibrin deposition leads to renal damage, increased renin release and a further increase in blood pressure. There is progressive uraemia and, if untreated, fewer than 10% of patients survive 10 years.

Treatment of hypertension is described on page 483. The outlook is good if treatment is started before renal impairment has occurred.

## Renal hypertension

### Bilateral renal disease

Hypertension commonly complicates bilateral renal disease, such as in chronic glomerulonephritis, reflux nephropathy or analgesic nephropathy. Two main mechanisms are responsible:

- Activation of the renin–angiotensin–aldosterone system
- Retention of salt and water, leading to an increase in blood volume and hence blood pressure.

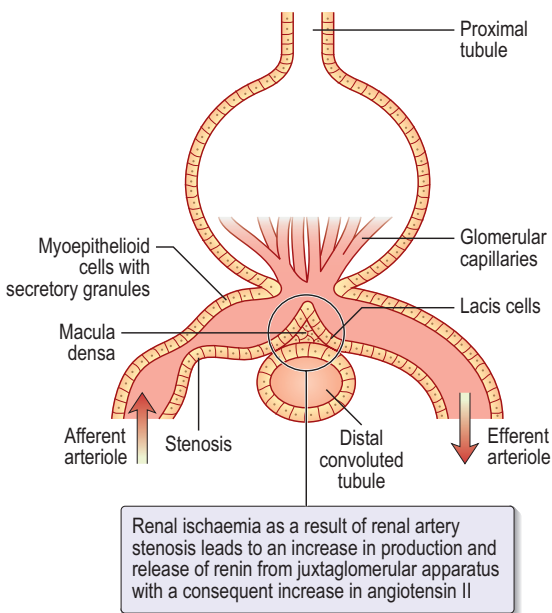
Good control of blood pressure will prevent further deterioration in renal function, with ACE inhibitors or angiotensin II blockers being the drugs of choice. These drugs confer an additional renoprotective effect for a given degree of blood pressure control when compared with other hypotensive drugs.

### Renovascular disease

Narrowing of the renal arteries (renal artery stenosis, RAS) is usually due to atheroma and classically occurs in patients with evidence of generalized atheroma, e.g. peripheral vascular disease and coronary artery disease. In younger patients, particularly women, it is more commonly due to fibromuscular hyperplasia. Renal perfusion pressure is reduced and renal ischaemia results in a reduction in the pressure in afferent glomerular arterioles. The mechanism of hypertension with RAS is illustrated in Fig. 9.5.

Imaging for RAS is indicated in the following circumstances:

- Evidence of atheromatous vascular disease in patients with hypertension or progressive CKD



**Fig. 9.5** The mechanism of hypertension in unilateral renal artery stenosis. (Adapted from Davidson 1991 Principles and Practice of Medicine. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh.)

- A rise in the serum creatinine by more than 30% after introduction of an ACE inhibitor or angiotensin II receptor antagonist (an increase of 30% is acceptable and reflects reduction of glomerular perfusion)
- Abdominal bruits in a patient with hypertension or CKD
- Recurrent flash pulmonary oedema without cardiopulmonary disease
- Renal asymmetry of >1.5 cm in length on imaging.

### Options for renal artery imaging

The gold standard for diagnosing renal artery stenosis is renal arteriography. This requires cannulation of the femoral vein and less invasive imaging with MR or CT angiography or Doppler ultrasonography is often used in the first instance. The choice of test is based on institutional expertise and patient factors, e.g. CT with intravenous contrast is avoided in patients with poor renal function. If non-invasive imaging is inconclusive and clinical suspicion is high then conventional arteriography is necessary.

## Management

Standard medical therapy for atherosclerotic vascular disease is indicated in all patients and includes lifestyle modification (increased exercise and smoking cessation), statins, antiplatelet therapy (p. 242) and antihypertensives for effective blood pressure control. Transluminal angioplasty (to dilate the stenotic region) and stent placement is used in patients with fibromuscular hyperplasia but does not offer any additional benefit (to medical treatment) in most patients with atheromatous stenosis.

## RENAL CALCULI AND NEPHROCALCINOSIS

Renal (nephrolithiasis) and ureteral stones (urolithiasis) are very common world-wide, with a lifetime risk of about 10%, and in many patients it is a recurrent problem. The male: female ratio is 2:1. Prevalence of stone disease is much higher in the Middle East due to a higher oxalate and lower calcium containing diet (see below) and increased risk of dehydration in hot climates.

## Aetiology

Most stones are composed of calcium oxalate and/or calcium phosphate. Other types are uric acid, magnesium ammonium phosphate (struvite) and cystine stones. Stone formation occurs when normally soluble material, e.g. calcium, supersaturates the urine and begins the process of crystal formation. In normal urine, inhibitors of crystal formation also prevent stone formation.

## Calcium stones

**Hypercalciuria** Increased urinary calcium excretion is the most common metabolic abnormality in calcium stone-formers. Causes of hypercalciuria are:

- Hypercalcaemia of which the most common cause (p. 648) leading to stone formation is primary hyperparathyroidism
- Excessive dietary intake of calcium
- Excessive resorption of calcium from bone, e.g. with prolonged immobilization
- Idiopathic hypercalciuria, in which there is increased absorption of calcium from the gut and in turn increased urinary excretion. Serum calcium levels are normal.

*Primary renal disease*, such as medullary sponge kidney and polycystic renal disease, is also associated with calcium stones. The alkaline urine seen in the renal tubular acidoses favours the precipitation of calcium phosphate.

**Hyperoxaluria** Increased oxalate excretion favours the formation of calcium oxalate, even if calcium excretion is normal. The main causes are:

- *Dietary hyperoxaluria*: A high dietary intake of oxalate-rich foods (e.g. spinach, rhubarb and tea) results in hyperoxaluria. Low dietary calcium intake can also result in hyperoxaluria via decreased intestinal binding of oxalate (by calcium) and the resulting increased oxalate absorption and urinary excretion.
- *Enteric hyperoxaluria*: Chronic intestinal malabsorption of any cause leads to reduced levels of intestinal calcium for oxalate binding (see above). Dehydration secondary to fluid loss from the gut also plays a part in stone formation.
- *Primary hyperoxaluria*: This is a rare autosomal recessive enzyme deficiency resulting in high levels of endogenous oxalate production. There is widespread calcium oxalate crystal deposition in the kidneys, and later in other tissues (myocardium, tissues and bone). CKD develops in the late teens or early 20s.

### Uric acid stones

These are associated with hyperuricaemia (p. 293) with or without clinical gout. Patients with ileostomies are also at risk of developing urate stones, as loss of bicarbonate from gastrointestinal secretions results in the production of an acid urine and reduced solubility of uric acid.

### Infection-induced stones

UTI with organisms that produce urease (*Proteus*, *Klebsiella* and *Pseudomonas* spp.) is associated with stones containing ammonium, magnesium and calcium. Urease hydrolyses urea to ammonia and this raises the urine pH. An alkaline urine and high ammonia concentration favour stone formation. These stones are often large and fill the pelvicalyceal system, producing the typical radiopaque staghorn calculus.

### Cystine stones

These occur with cystinuria, an autosomal recessive condition affecting cystine and dibasic amino acid transport (lysine, ornithine and arginine) in the epithelial cells of renal tubules and the gastrointestinal tract. Excessive urinary excretion of cystine, the least soluble of the amino acids, leads to the formation of crystals and calculi.

### Clinical features

Most people with urinary tract calculi are asymptomatic; pain is the most common symptom (Table 9.6). Large staghorn renal calculi cause loin pain. *Ureteric stones* cause renal colic, a severe intermittent pain lasting for hours. The pain is felt anywhere between the loin and the groin, and may radiate into the scrotum or labium or into the tip of the penis. Nausea, vomiting and sweating are common. Haematuria often occurs. There will be features of acute pyelonephritis or Gram-negative septicaemia if there is associated infection in an obstructed urinary system. *Bladder stones* present with urinary



**Table 9.6** Clinical features of urinary tract calculi

|                           |
|---------------------------|
| Asymptomatic              |
| Pain                      |
| Haematuria                |
| Urinary tract infection   |
| Urinary tract obstruction |

frequency and haematuria. *Urethral stones* may cause bladder outflow obstruction, resulting in anuria and painful bladder distension.

## Differential diagnosis

Bleeding within the kidney, e.g. after renal biopsy, can produce clots that lodge temporarily in the ureter and produce ureteric colic. Pain may also occur from sloughed necrotic renal papillae (p. 382). Pain from an ectopic pregnancy or leaking aortic aneurysm may be mistaken for renal colic.

## Investigations

These include a mid-stream specimen of urine for culture and measurement of serum urea, electrolytes, creatinine and calcium levels. A plain abdominal X-ray (KUB: kidney, ureters and bladder) may show a radiopaque stone in the line of the renal tract. Unenhanced helical (spiral) CT is the best diagnostic test available; a normal CT scan during an episode of pain excludes calculus disease as the cause of the pain. A detailed history may reveal possible aetiological factors for stone formation, e.g. vitamin D consumption (leading to hypercalcaemia), gouty arthritis, recurrent UTIs, intestinal resection. A further work-up to look for underlying metabolic risk factors is indicated in all patients other than the elderly with a single episode (Table 9.7).

## Management

**Initial treatment** A strong analgesic, e.g. diclofenac 75 mg by intravenous infusion is given to relieve the pain of renal colic. Patients are managed at home if there is no evidence of sepsis and they are able to take oral medications and fluids. Most small ureteric stones ( $\leq 5$  mm) will pass spontaneously. Indications for intervention include persistent pain, infection above the site of obstruction, and failure of the stone to pass down the ureter. The options for stone removal include the following:

- Extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy (ESWL) will fragment most stones which then pass spontaneously.
- Endoscopy (ureteroscopy) with a YAG laser is used for larger stones.
- Open surgery is rarely needed.

**Table 9.7** Investigations to identify the cause of stone formation

| Urine   |
|---|
| Chemical analysis of any stone passed   |
| MSU for culture and sensitivity   |
| 24-h urine collection for calcium, oxalate, uric acid                                 |
| Screen for cystinuria (purple colour of urine after addition of sodium nitroprusside) |
| Blood   |
| Serum urea and electrolytes   |
| Serum calcium   |
| Serum urate   |
| Plasma bicarbonate (low in renal tubular acidosis)                                    |
| Radiography   |
| CT scan will normally have been performed at diagnosis                                |
| Imaging is also to look for a primary renal disease                                   |
| <i>MSU, mid-stream urine specimen.</i>  |

**Prevention of recurrence** Further treatment depends on the type of stone and any underlying condition identified during screening investigations (Table 9.7). For prevention of all stones, whatever the cause, a high intake of fluid (to produce a urine volume of 2–2.5 L/day) must be maintained, particularly during the summer months. This is the mainstay of treatment when no metabolic or renal abnormality has been identified ('idiopathic stone formers').

- *Idiopathic hypercalciuria.* Patients should be encouraged to consume a normal calcium diet and avoid foods containing large amounts of oxalate. A water softener may be helpful for patients who live in hard water areas. Thiazide diuretics, e.g. bendroflumethiazide 2.5 mg daily, reduce urinary calcium excretion and are used if hypercalciuria persists.
- *Mixed infective stones.* Meticulous control of bacteriuria, if necessary with long-term, low-dose, prophylactic antibiotics and a high fluid intake helps to prevent recurrent stone formation.
- *Uric acid stones* are prevented by the long-term use of the xanthine oxidase inhibitor, allopurinol, which allows the excretion of the more soluble precursor compound, hypoxanthine, in preference to uric acid. Oral sodium bicarbonate supplements to maintain an alkaline urine, and hence increased solubility of uric acid, are an alternative approach in those patients unable to tolerate allopurinol.

- *Cystine stones.* A very high fluid intake (5 L of water in 24 hours) is needed to maintain solubility of cystine in the urine. An alternative is D-penicillamine, which chelates cystine, forming a more soluble complex.

## Nephrocalcinosis

Nephrocalcinosis is diffuse renal parenchymal calcification that is detectable radiologically. The causes are listed in Table 9.8. It is typically painless and hypertension and renal impairment commonly occur. Treatment is of the underlying cause.

## URINARY TRACT OBSTRUCTION

The urinary tract may be obstructed at any point between the kidney and the urethral meatus resulting in dilatation of the tract proximal to the obstruction. Dilatation of the renal pelvis is known as *hydronephrosis*. Eventually there is compression and thinning of the renal parenchyma with a decrease in size of the kidney.

### Aetiology

In adults the common causes are prostatic obstruction (hypertrophy or tumour), gynaecological cancer and calculi (Table 9.9).

### Clinical features

- *Upper urinary tract obstruction* results in a dull ache in the flank or loin, which may be provoked by an increase in urine volume, e.g. high fluid intake or diuretics. Complete anuria is strongly suggestive of complete bilateral obstruction or complete obstruction of a single functioning kidney. Partial obstruction causes polyuria as a result of tubular damage and impairment of concentrating mechanisms.
- *Bladder outlet obstruction* results in hesitancy, poor stream, terminal dribbling and a sense of incomplete emptying. Retention with overflow is characterized by the frequent passage of small quantities of urine. Infection commonly occurs and may precipitate acute retention of urine.

**Table 9.8** Common causes of nephrocalcinosis

| Mainly medullary        | Mainly cortical (rare)  |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Hypercalcaemia          | Renal cortical necrosis |
| Renal tubular acidosis  |                         |
| Primary hyperoxaluria   |                         |
| Medullary sponge kidney |                         |
| Tuberculosis            |                         |

**Table 9.9** Causes of urinary tract obstruction

| <b>Within the lumen</b>  |
|--|
| Calculus   |
| Tumour of renal pelvis or ureter   |
| Blood clot   |
| Sloughed renal papillae (diabetes, NSAIDs, sickle cell disease or trait)               |
| <b>Within the wall</b>   |
| Congenital anomalies of the urinary tract (usually detected antenatally or in infancy) |
| Stricture: ureteric or urethral  |
| Neuropathic bladder  |
| <b>Pressure from outside the wall</b>  |
| Prostatic hypertrophy/tumour   |
| Pelvic tumours   |
| Diverticulitis   |
| Aortic aneurysm  |
| Retroperitoneal fibrosis (periaortitis)  |
| Accidental surgical ligation of the ureter   |
| Retrocaval ureter (right-sided obstruction)  |
| Pelviureteric compression (bands; aberrant vessels)                                    |
| Phimosis   |

Depending on the site of obstruction an enlarged bladder or hydronephrotic kidney may be felt on examination. Pelvic (for malignancy) and rectal examination (for prostate enlargement) is essential in determining the cause of obstruction.

## Investigations

Imaging studies are performed to identify the site and nature of the obstruction and, together with serum creatinine, to assess function of the affected kidney.

- **Imaging:** Ultrasonography is the initial investigation but helical/spiral CT scanning has a higher sensitivity for detecting calculi as well as details of the obstruction. Excretion urography identifies the site of obstruction and shows a characteristic appearance (a delayed nephrogram, which eventually becomes denser than the non-obstructed side).
- Radionuclide studies (p. 362) are of no value in the investigation of acute obstruction but may help in longstanding obstruction, to differentiate true

obstructive uropathy from retention of tracer in a baggy low-pressure unobstructed pelvicalyceal system.

- Subsequent investigations may include retrograde and antegrade pyelography (p. 362), cystoscopy and pressure-flow studies during bladder filling and voiding.

## Management

Surgery is the usual treatment for persistent urinary tract obstruction. Elimination of the obstruction may be associated with a massive post-operative diuresis, resulting partly from a solute diuresis from salt and urea retained during obstruction and partly from the renal concentrating defect. In some cases definitive relief of obstruction is not possible and urinary diversion may be required. This may be simply an indwelling urethral catheter, a stent placed across the obstructing lesion, or the formation of an ileal conduit.

## ACUTE RENAL FAILURE/ACUTE KIDNEY INJURY

The term 'renal failure' means failure of renal excretory function as a result of reduction of the GFR. This is accompanied to a variable extent by failure of erythropoietin production, vitamin D hydroxylation, regulation of acid–base balance, regulation of salt and water balance and blood pressure control.

## Definition

The term 'acute kidney injury' has replaced the term acute renal failure. AKI is an abrupt sustained rise in serum urea and creatinine due to a rapid decline in GFR leading to loss of normal water and solute homeostasis. It is usually but not invariably reversible or self-limiting. In contrast CKD implies long-standing, and usually progressive, impairment in renal function. There are universal criteria for diagnosis of AKI with three levels of increasing kidney dysfunction and two outcomes (Table 9.10).

## Classification

Renal failure results in reduced excretion of nitrogenous waste products of which urea is the most commonly measured. A raised serum concentration (uraemia) is classified as (i) prerenal, (ii) renal (intrinsic) or (iii) postrenal. This classification allows the clinician to consider the cause of the injury systematically for the purposes of diagnosis and management. AKI may also result from a combination of these factors, e.g. in post-surgical AKI, fluid depletion (prerenal), systemic infection and nephrotoxic drugs (renal) may all play a role. Acute injury may also complicate CKD ('acute-on-chronic').

**Table 9.10** RIFLE classification for acute kidney injury

| Grade   | Serum creatinine  | Urine output criteria      |
|---------|---|----------------------------|
| Risk    | ↑ SCr to $\geq 1.5 \times$ from baseline  | $<0.5$ mL/kg/h $\geq 6$ h  |
| Injury  | ↑ SCr $\geq 2 \times$ from baseline   | $<0.5$ mL/kg/h $\geq 12$ h |
| Failure | ↑ SCr $\geq 3 \times$ from baseline <i>or</i> SCr $\geq 350$ $\mu\text{mol/L}$ with an acute increase $\geq 40$ $\mu\text{mol/L}$ | $<0.3$ mL/kg/h $\geq 24$ h |
| Loss    | Persistent AKI $> 4$ weeks  |                            |
| ESKD    | Persistent renal failure $>3$ months  |                            |

*SCr, serum creatinine; ESKD, end-stage kidney disease.*

- Baseline SCr is considered to be within 1 week.
- When baseline SCr is not known and in the absence of a history of chronic kidney disease, calculate a baseline SCr using the Modification of Diet in Renal Disease equation for assessment of kidney function, assuming a glomerular filtration rate of 75 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>.
- Only one criterion (SCr or urine output) has to be fulfilled to qualify for a stage.
- AKI should be both abrupt (within 1–7 days) and sustained (more than 24 hours).

## Prerenal failure

There is impaired perfusion of the kidneys with blood due to one or more of hypovolaemia, hypotension, impaired cardiac pump efficiency, or vascular disease limiting renal blood flow. The kidney is normally able to maintain glomerular filtration in spite of wide variations in the renal perfusion pressure and volume status – so-called ‘autoregulation’. Maintenance of a normal GFR in the face of decreased systemic pressure depends on the intrarenal production of prostaglandins and angiotensin II. With severe or prolonged hypovolaemia there is eventually a drop in glomerular filtration, termed ‘prerenal failure’. Drugs that impair renal autoregulation, such as ACE inhibitors and NSAIDs, increase the tendency to develop prerenal uraemia.

Prerenal uraemia is characterized in the early stages by lack of structural damage and rapid reversibility once normal renal perfusion has been restored. However, all causes of prerenal uraemia may, if sustained, lead to ischaemic tubule cell injury (ischaemic intrinsic AKI) from which recovery will be delayed.

A number of criteria have been proposed to differentiate between prerenal and intrinsic renal causes of uraemia (Table 9.11).

- *Urine specific gravity and urine osmolality* are easily obtained measures of concentrating ability but are unreliable in the presence of glycosuria or other osmotically active substances in the urine.
- *Urine sodium* is low if there is avid tubular reabsorption, but may be increased by diuretics or dopamine.

**Table 9.11** Criteria for distinction between prerenal and intrinsic causes of renal failure

|  | Prerenal | Intrinsic |
|--|----------|-----------|
| Urine specific gravity   | >1.020   | <1.010    |
| Urine osmolality (mOsm/kg)   | >500     | <350      |
| Urine sodium (mmol/L)  | <20      | >40       |
| Fractional excretion of sodium (Na <sup>+</sup> )  | <1%      | >1%       |
| $\text{Fractional excretion of Na}^+ = \frac{\text{urine [sodium]} + \text{urine [creatinine]} \times 100}{\text{plasma [sodium]} \text{ plasma [creatinine]}}$ <p>where [ ] is the concentration.</p> |          |           |

- *Fractional excretion of sodium (FE<sub>Na</sub>)*, the ratio of sodium clearance to creatinine clearance, increases the reliability of this index but may remain low in some 'intrinsic' renal diseases, including contrast nephropathy and myoglobinuria.

The urinary indices do not, however, completely segregate the two conditions and they are no substitute for a proper clinical assessment.

## Management

Prerenal uraemia due to hypovolaemia or hypotension should be treated with prompt replacement of the appropriate fluid (e.g. blood in the case of post-haemorrhagic shock or crystalloid in the case of vomiting, diarrhoea or polyuria) to correct the problem and prevent development of ischaemic renal injury and established AKI. In some cases, e.g. with a very sick patient, volume replacement is guided by measurement of the central venous pressure (CVP) (p. 581). With pure prerenal uraemia, urine output should increase with volume replacement. If the problem relates to cardiac pump insufficiency or occlusion of the renal vasculature the management is to try to correct the underlying cause.

## Postrenal uraemia

Postrenal uraemia occurs when both urinary outflow tracts are obstructed or when the tract is obstructed in a patient with a single functional kidney (p. 381). It is usually quickly reversed if the obstruction is relieved. All patients with AKI must be examined for evidence of obstruction (enlarged palpable kidneys or bladder, large prostate on rectal examination, pelvic masses on vaginal examination in women) and undergo renal ultrasonography to look for hydronephrosis and dilated ureters. Bladder outflow obstruction is ruled out by flushing of an existing catheter or insertion of a urethral catheter (which should then be removed unless a large volume of urine is obtained).

Treatment of obstruction is usually by a temporary measure, e.g. urethral/suprapubic catheterization or percutaneous nephrostomy, until definitive treatment of the obstructing lesion can be undertaken (p. 383).

## Acute uraemia due to renal parenchymal disease

This is most commonly due to acute tubular necrosis as a result of renal ischaemia or direct renal toxins (Table 9.12). Other causes include diseases affecting the interstitium (drug hypersensitivity, infections), the renal vasculature (vasculitis, accelerated hypertension, cholesterol embolism, haemolytic uraemic syndrome, thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura) and acute glomerulonephritis.

## Clinical and biochemical features

The early stages of AKI are often completely asymptomatic. It is not the accumulation of urea itself that causes symptoms, but a combination of many different metabolic abnormalities.

- *Alteration of urine volume.* Oliguria usually occurs in the early stages. Recovery of renal function typically occurs after 7–21 days and in the

**Table 9.12** Some causes of acute tubular necrosis

|  |
|--|
| Haemorrhage  |
| Burns  |
| Diarrhoea and vomiting, fluid loss from fistulae   |
| Acute pancreatitis   |
| Diuretics  |
| Myocardial infarction  |
| Congestive cardiac failure   |
| Endotoxic shock  |
| Snake bite   |
| Myoglobinaemia   |
| Haemoglobinaemia (due to haemolysis, e.g. in falciparum malaria, 'blackwater fever')   |
| Hepatorenal syndrome   |
| Radiological contrast agents   |
| Drugs, e.g. aminoglycosides, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors, platinum derivatives |
| Abruptio placentae   |
| Pre-eclampsia and eclampsia  |



recovery phase, which may last some weeks, there is often passage of large amounts of dilute urine.

- *Biochemical abnormalities* include hyperkalaemia, metabolic acidosis (unless there is loss of hydrogen ions by vomiting or aspiration of gastric contents), hyponatraemia (due to water overload from continued drinking after the onset of oliguria or administration of 5% glucose), hypocalcaemia due to reduced renal production of 1,25 dihydroxycholecalciferol and hyperphosphataemia due to phosphate retention.
- *Symptoms* of uraemia are weakness, fatigue, anorexia, nausea and vomiting, followed by mental confusion, seizures and coma. There may be pruritus and bruising. Breathlessness occurs from a combination of anaemia and pulmonary oedema secondary to volume overload. Pericarditis occurs with severe untreated uraemia and may be complicated by a pericardial effusion and tamponade. Impaired platelet function causes bruising and exacerbates gastrointestinal bleeding. Infection occurs due to immune suppression.

## Investigation of the uraemic emergency

The purpose of investigation, together with clinical examination, is threefold:

1. To differentiate acute from chronic uraemia (p. 392).
2. To document the degree of renal impairment and obtain baseline values so that the response to treatment can be monitored. This is accomplished by measurement of serum urea and creatinine.
3. To establish whether AKI is prerenal, renal or postrenal, and to determine the underlying cause so that specific treatment (e.g. intensive immunosuppression in Wegener's granulomatosis) may be instituted as early as possible and thus prevent progression to irreversible renal failure.

## Investigations

- Blood count: anaemia and a very high erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) may suggest myeloma or a vasculitis as the underlying cause.
- Urine and blood cultures to exclude infection.
- Urine dipstick testing and microscopy: glomerulonephritis is suggested by haematuria and proteinuria on dipstick testing and by the presence of red cell casts on urine microscopy (p. 361).
- Urinary electrolytes (Table 9.11) may help to exclude a significant prerenal element to AKI.
- Serum calcium, phosphate and uric acid.
- Renal ultrasound excludes obstruction and gives an assessment of renal size; CT is useful for the diagnosis of retroperitoneal fibrosis and some

other causes of urinary obstruction, and may also indicate cortical scarring.

- Histological investigations: renal biopsy should be performed in every patient with unexplained AKI and normal-sized kidneys.
- Optional investigations (depending on the case):
  - Serum protein electrophoresis for myeloma
  - Serum autoantibodies, ANCA (p. 299) and complement
  - Antibodies to hepatitis B and C and HIV may suggest polyarteritis (HBV), cryoglobulinaemia (HCV) or HIV as the cause of AKI.

## Management

The best form of management of AKI is prevention, e.g. by optimizing fluid balance in hospitalized patients (p. 326) and volume expansion (0.9% sodium chloride at 1 mL/kg/h for 12 hours before the procedure and several hours afterwards) in patients with impaired kidney function (eGFR below 60 mL/min/1.73m<sup>2</sup>) undergoing radiological contrast studies. The principles of management of established AKI are summarized in Emergency Box 9.1. Hypovolaemia (prerenal) and obstruction (postrenal) must be excluded as contributing factors in all patients. Dialysis and haemofiltration are sometimes necessary; they do not hasten recovery from AKI but are performed as a bridge while patients are receiving treatment for the underlying cause or there is a natural improvement in kidney function. Indications for dialysis are listed in Table 9.13. Whether haemodialysis, haemofiltration or peritoneal dialysis (p. 396) is used depends on the facilities available and the clinical circumstances.

## Prognosis

This depends on the underlying cause. The most common cause of death is sepsis as a result of impaired immune defence (from uraemia and malnutrition) and instrumentation (dialysis and urinary catheters and vascular lines). In those who survive, renal function usually begins to recover within 1–3 weeks. AKI is irreversible in a few patients, probably because of cortical necrosis which, unlike tubules which regenerate, heals with the formation of scar tissue.

## CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE

CKD implies longstanding, and usually progressive, impairment in renal function. It is defined on the basis of persistent (>3 months) evidence of kidney damage (proteinuria, haematuria, or anatomical abnormality) and/or impaired glomerular filtration rate (Table 9.14). Patients at risk of CKD, e.g. with diabetes mellitus or hypertension, should be regularly screened to look for evidence of disease.



## Emergency Box 9.1

### Principles of management of a patient with acute kidney injury

#### Emergency resuscitation

To prevent death from hyperkalaemia (p. 340) or pulmonary oedema (p. 443).

#### Establish the aetiology and treat the underlying cause

- History, including family history, systemic disease, use of nephrotoxic drugs
- Examination includes assessment of haemodynamic status, pelvic and rectal examination
- Investigations (p. 387). May include bladder catheterization or flush of existing catheter to exclude obstruction

#### Prevention of further renal damage

Early detection of infection and prompt treatment with antibiotics. Avoid hypovolaemia, nephrotoxic drugs, NSAIDs and ACE inhibitors.

#### Management of established renal failure

- Seek advice from a nephrologist
- Once fluid balance has been corrected, the daily fluid intake should equal fluid lost on the previous day plus insensible losses (approximately 500 mL)
- Diet – enteral nutrition is preferred over parenteral. Sodium and potassium is restricted
- Nursing care, e.g. prevention of pressure sores
- Adjust doses of drugs that are excreted by the kidney, and monitor serum drug levels where appropriate (refer to national formulary for guidance)
- Monitor daily: serum biochemistry, fluid input and output and bodyweight to assess fluid balance changes
- Frequent review regarding the need for dialysis

#### Careful fluid and electrolyte balance during recovery phase

Large volumes of dilute urine may be passed until the kidney recovers its concentrating ability.

NSAIDs, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs; ACE, angiotensin-converting enzyme.

## Aetiology

Causes of CKD vary depending on geographical area, racial group and age. Diabetes mellitus, hypertension and atherosclerotic renal vascular disease are the most common causes in European countries (Table 9.15). In parts of the Middle East, schistosomiasis is a common cause due to a ureterovesical

**Table 9.13** Indications for dialysis and/or haemofiltration in acute kidney injury (AKI)

|  |
|--|
| Progressive uraemia with encephalopathy or pericarditis  |
| Severe biochemical derangement especially if there is a rising trend in an oliguric patient and in hypercatabolic patients |
| Hyperkalaemia not controlled by conservative measures  |
| Pulmonary oedema   |
| Severe metabolic acidosis: pH < 7.1  |
| For removal of drugs, causing the AKI, e.g. gentamicin, lithium, severe aspirin overdose                                   |

**Table 9.14** Classification of chronic kidney disease

| Test         | Measurement method         | Definition                           |
|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Impaired GFR | Formulae based on SCr      | eGFR < 60 mL/min/1.73 m <sup>2</sup> |
| Proteinuria  | Early morning urine sample | ACR ≥ 30 mg/mmol or PCR ≥ 50 mg/mmol |
| Haematuria   | Dipstick urinalysis        | >1+ and urological causes excluded   |

*(e)GFR, (estimated) glomerular filtration rate; SCr, serum creatinine; ACR, albumin:creatinine ratio; PCR, protein:creatinine ratio.*

stricture causing urinary tract obstruction. Regardless of the underlying cause, fibrosis of the remaining tubules, glomeruli and small blood vessels results in progressive renal scarring and loss of renal function in some individuals.

## Clinical features and investigations

The early stages of renal failure are often completely asymptomatic. With a declining GRF and an associated rise in serum urea and creatinine concentrations there is an accumulation of symptoms and signs described below. The actual metabolites that are involved in the genesis of many of these clinical features is not known (Figure 9.6). Investigations are similar to those in AKI (p. 387).

**Anaemia** is primarily due to reduced erythropoietin production by the diseased kidney. Shortened red cell survival, increased blood loss (from the gut, during haemodialysis and as a result of repeated sampling) and dietary deficiency of haematinics (iron and folate) also contribute.

**Bone disease** The term 'renal osteodystrophy' embraces the various forms of bone disease that develop in CKD, i.e. osteomalacia, osteoporosis,

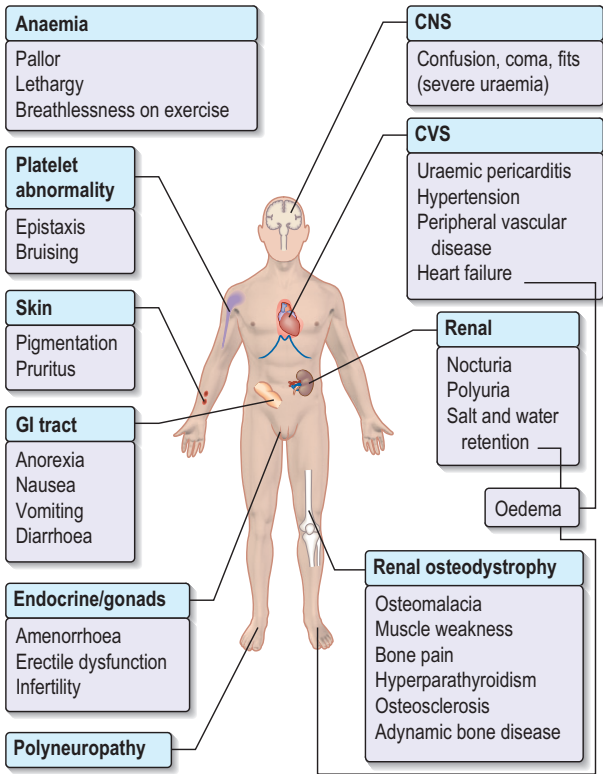
**Table 9.15** Causes of chronic kidney disease

|  |
|--|
| <b>Congenital and inherited disease</b>                                |
| Polycystic kidney disease (adult and infantile forms)                  |
| Tuberous sclerosis   |
| Congenital obstructive uropathy  |
| Other rare causes  |
| <b>Glomerular disease</b>  |
| Primary glomerulonephritides   |
| Secondary glomerular disease, e.g. diabetes mellitus, amyloidosis, SLE |
| <b>Vascular disease</b>  |
| Hypertensive nephrosclerosis (common in black Africans)                |
| Reno-vascular disease  |
| Small and medium-sized vessel vasculitis                               |
| <b>Tubulointerstitial disease</b>                                      |
| See page 374   |
| <b>Urinary tract obstruction</b>                                       |
| Any causes of chronic obstruction (p. 381).                            |
| <i>SLE, systemic lupus erythematosus.</i>                              |

secondary and tertiary hyperparathyroidism and osteosclerosis. Renal phosphate retention and impaired production of 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D (the active hormonal form of vitamin D) lead to a fall in serum calcium concentration and hence to a compensatory increase in parathyroid hormone (PTH) secretion. A sustained excess of PTH results in skeletal decalcification with the classic radiological features described in Fig. 9.7. Osteosclerosis (hardening of bone) may be a result of hyperparathyroidism.

**Neurological** complications occur in almost all patients with severe CKD and are improved by dialysis. Polyneuropathy manifests as peripheral paraesthesiae and weakness. Autonomic dysfunction presents as postural hypotension and disturbed gastrointestinal motility. In advanced uraemia (serum urea >50–60 mmol/L) there is depressed cerebral function, myoclonic twitching and fits. Median nerve compression in the carpal tunnel is common and is usually caused by  $\beta_2$ -microglobulin-related amyloidosis (a complication of dialysis).

**Cardiovascular disease** The highest mortality in CKD is from cardiovascular disease particularly myocardial infarction, cardiac failure, sudden cardiac death and stroke. This occurs due to an increased frequency of hypertension, dyslipidaemia and vascular calcification. Renal disease also



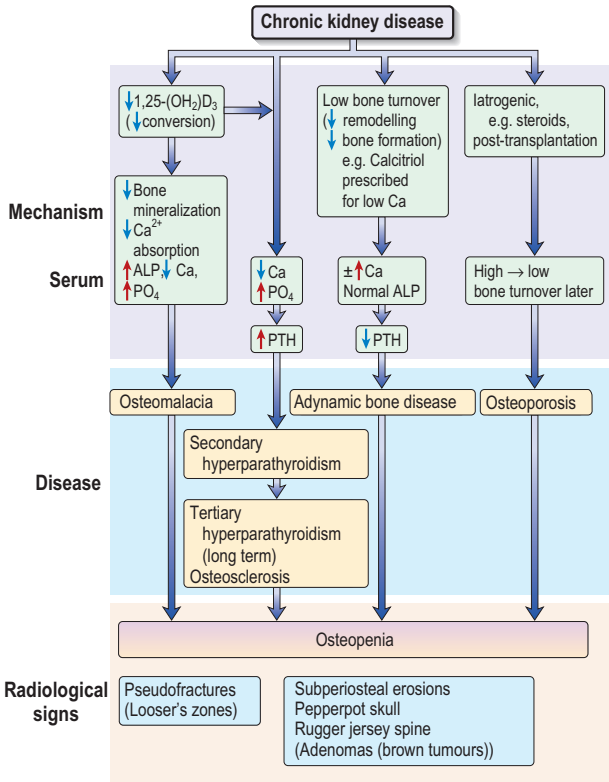
**Fig. 9.6** Symptoms and signs of chronic kidney disease. Oedema may be due to a combination of primary renal salt and water retention and heart failure. GI, gastrointestinal.

results in a form of cardiomyopathy with both systolic and diastolic dysfunction. Pericarditis and pericardial effusion occurs in severe uraemia.

**Other complications** include an increased risk of peptic ulceration, acute pancreatitis, hyperuricaemia, erectile dysfunction and an increased incidence of malignancy.

## Differentiating AKI from CKD

Distinction between AKI and CKD depends on the history, duration of symptoms and previous urinalysis or measurement of serum creatinine. A



**Fig. 9.7 Renal osteodystrophy.** Pathogenesis and radiological features of renal bone disease. ALP, alkaline phosphatase.

normochromic anaemia, small kidneys on ultrasonography and the presence of renal osteodystrophy favour a chronic process.

## Management

The aims of treatment are:

- Specific therapy directed at the underlying cause of renal disease, e.g. immunosuppressive agents for vasculitis and tight metabolic control in diabetes
- Slow deterioration of kidney function (renoprotection)

- Reduce cardiovascular risk
- Treat the complications, e.g. anaemia
- Appropriate dose adjustment of prescribed drugs based on guidance in a national formulary.

## Renoprotection

The goal of treatment should be to maintain the blood pressure at less than 120/80 mmHg and to maintain a urinary protein concentration of less than 0.3 g/24 hours. Good blood pressure control may slow the decline in renal function.

Patients with CKD and proteinuria >1 g/24 hours should receive:

- ACE inhibitor, increasing to maximum dose
- Angiotensin receptor antagonist if goals are not achieved; in diabetes mellitus start with angiotensin receptor antagonist
- Diuretic to prevent hyperkalaemia and help to control blood pressure
- Calcium-channel blocker (verapamil or diltiazem) if goals not achieved.

## Reduce cardiovascular risk

- Optimal control of BP and reduction of proteinuria (as above).
- Statins to lower cholesterol to <4.5 mmol/L.
- Cessation of smoking.
- Optimize diabetic control, HbA<sub>1c</sub> <7%.
- Normal protein diet (0.8–1 g/kg bodyweight/day)

## Correction of complications

**Hyperkalaemia** often responds to dietary restriction of potassium intake. Drugs which cause potassium retention should be stopped. Occasionally it is necessary to prescribe ion-exchange resins to remove potassium in the gastrointestinal tract. Emergency treatment of severe hyperkalaemia is described on page 340.

**Calcium and phosphate** Hyperphosphataemia is treated by dietary phosphate restriction and administration of oral phosphate-binding agents such as calcium carbonate (contraindicated with hypercalcaemia or hypercalciuria), sevelamer or lanthanum carbonate. The serum calcium should be maintained in the normal range through the use of synthetic vitamin D analogues such as 1 $\alpha$ -cholecalciferol or the vitamin D metabolite 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D<sub>3</sub> (1,25-(OH)<sub>2</sub>D<sub>3</sub>).

**Anaemia** Iron deficiency is common in patients with CKD and should be treated. Recombinant human erythropoietin is an effective but expensive treatment for the anaemia of CKD. It is administered subcutaneously or intravenously three times weekly. Target Hb is 11–12 g/dL and failure to respond may be the result of haematinic deficiency, bleeding, malignancy or infection. The disadvantages of treatment are that erythropoietin may



accelerate hypertension and, rarely, lead to encephalopathy with convulsions.

**Acidosis** Systemic acidosis accompanies the decline in renal function and may contribute to increased serum potassium levels as well as dyspnoea and lethargy. Treatment is with oral sodium bicarbonate (4.8 g or 57 mmol daily).

**Infections** Patients with CKD have an increased risk of infections which may be fatal. Influenza and pneumococcal vaccination should be administered.

## Referral to a nephrologist

Most patients with CKD are managed in primary care and do not require referral to a nephrologist at the outset. Indications for specialist referral are based on the need for further investigation, complex treatment or because there is a high likelihood of progression to dialysis (Table 9.16).

## RENAL REPLACEMENT THERAPY

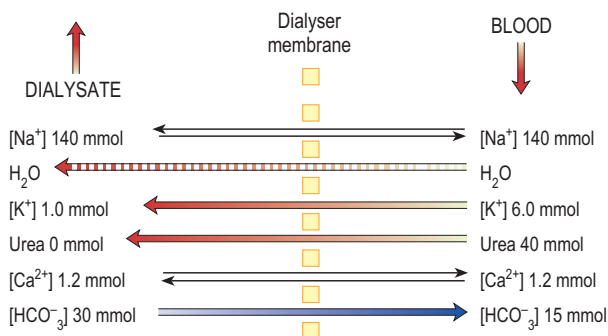
### Dialysis

'Uraemic toxins' are efficiently removed from the blood by the process of diffusion across a semipermeable membrane towards the low concentrations present in dialysis fluid (Fig. 9.8). The gradient is maintained by replacing used dialysis fluid with fresh solution. In haemodialysis, blood in an extra-corporeal circulation is exposed to dialysis fluid separated by an artificial semipermeable membrane. In peritoneal dialysis the peritoneum is used as

**Table 9.16** Indications for referral of a patient with CKD to a nephrologist

| Patient group                          | Assessment  |
|--|---|
| Severe CKD                             | GFR < 30 mL/min/1.73 m <sup>2</sup>                             |
| Rapidly deteriorating kidney function  | Fall in eGFR > 5 mL/min in 1 year or >10 mL/min/year in 5 years |
| Higher levels of proteinuria           | ACR ≥ 70 mg/mmol or PCR ≥ 100 mg/mmol                           |
| Proteinuria and haematuria             | Proteinuria with ≥+1 blood on urine dipstick                    |
| Poorly controlled hypertension         | Despite use of four antihypertensive drugs                      |
| Suspected rare or genetic cause of CKD |   |

*ACR, albumin:creatinine ratio; PCR, protein:creatinine ratio.*



**Fig. 9.8** The principle of haemodialysis.

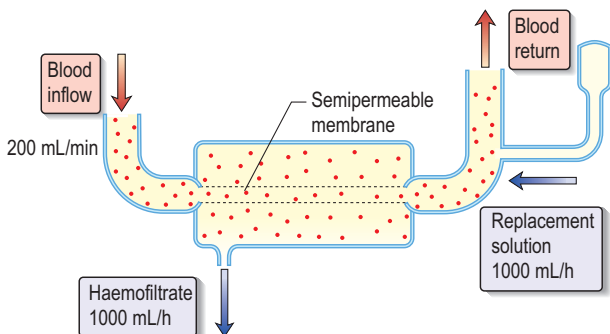
the semipermeable membrane and dialysis fluid is instilled into the peritoneal cavity.

## Haemodialysis

Adequate dialysis requires a blood flow of at least 200 mL/min and the most reliable way of achieving this is by surgical construction of an arterio-venous fistula, usually in the forearm. This provides a permanent and easily accessible site for the insertion of needles. An adult of average size usually requires 4–5 hours of haemodialysis three times a week, which may be performed in hospital or at home. All patients are anticoagulated during treatment (usually with heparin) because contact of blood with foreign surfaces activates the clotting cascade. The most common acute complication of haemodialysis is hypotension, caused in part by excessive removal of extracellular fluid.

## Peritoneal dialysis

A permanent tube (Tenckhoff catheter) is placed into the peritoneal cavity via a subcutaneous tunnel. The bags of dialysate are connected to the catheter using a sterile, no-touch technique and the fluid run into the peritoneal cavity. Urea, creatinine, phosphate and other uraemic toxins pass into the dialysate down their concentration gradients and the dialysate is then collected. With continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD) 1.5–3 L of dialysate are introduced and exchanged three to five times a day. Bacterial peritonitis, often with *Staph. epidermidis*, is the most common serious complication of peritoneal dialysis. Treatment is with appropriate antibiotics, often given intraperitoneally.



**Fig. 9.9** Principles of haemofiltration.

## Haemofiltration

Haemofiltration involves the removal of plasma water and its dissolved constituents (e.g.  $\text{Na}^+$ ,  $\text{K}^+$ , urea, phosphate) and replacing it with a solution of the desired biochemical composition. The procedure employs a highly permeable membrane, which allows large amounts of fluid and solute to be removed from the patient (Fig. 9.9). It is used mostly in the intensive care setting in the management of AKI.

## Complications of all long-term dialysis

Cardiovascular disease (as a result of atheroma) and sepsis are the leading causes of death in long-term dialysis patients. Causes of fatal sepsis include peritonitis complicating peritoneal dialysis and *Staph. aureus* infection (including endocarditis) complicating the use of indwelling access devices for haemodialysis. Amyloidosis is the result of the accumulation and polymerization of  $\beta_2$ -microglobulin. This molecule (a component of human leucocyte antigen [HLA] proteins on most cell membranes) is normally excreted by the kidneys, but is not removed by dialysis membranes. Deposition results in the carpal tunnel syndrome and joint pains, particularly of the shoulders.

## Transplantation

Successful renal transplantation offers the potential for complete rehabilitation in, and is the treatment of choice for most patients with, end-stage renal failure. In the best centres graft survival is 80% at 10 years. Kidneys are obtained from cadavers or, less frequently, a living donor, e.g. a close relative. The donor must be ABO compatible, and good HLA matching increases the chances of successful transplantation. The donor kidney is placed in the

iliac fossa and anastomosed to the iliac vessels of the recipient; the donor ureter is placed into the recipient's bladder.

Long-term immunosuppressive treatment is necessary (unless the donor is an identical twin, i.e. genetically identical) to reduce the incidence of graft rejection. This treatment comprises corticosteroids, azathioprine or mycophenolate mofetil and ciclosporin or tacrolimus. Monoclonal and polyclonal antibodies such as antilymphocyte and anti-thymocyte globulin or basiliximab and daclizumab are potent immunosuppressives and are used in selected patients. The complications of renal transplantation and immunosuppression include opportunistic infection (e.g. with *Pneumocystis jiroveci*), hypertension, development of tumours (skin malignancies and lymphomas) and, occasionally, recurrence of the renal disease (e.g. Goodpasture's syndrome).

## CYSTIC RENAL DISEASE

### Solitary and multiple renal cysts

Renal cysts are common, particularly with advancing age. They are usually asymptomatic and discovered incidentally on ultrasonography performed for some other reason. Occasionally they may cause pain and/or haematuria.

### Autosomal-dominant polycystic kidney disease

Autosomal-dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD) is a common (1 : 1000) autosomal dominantly inherited condition in which multiple cysts develop throughout both kidneys. Cysts increase in size with advancing age and lead to renal enlargement and the progressive destruction of normal kidney tissue, with gradual loss of renal function. Most cases are due to a mutation in the *PKD1* gene (short arm of chromosome 16), which encodes for a protein, polycystin 1, an integral membrane protein which regulates tubular and vascular development in kidneys and other organs. A second gene, *PKD2*, on chromosome 4 accounts for the remaining cases.

### Clinical features

The disease presents at any age after the second decade. Clinical features include:

- Acute loin pain due to cyst haemorrhage or infection, or urinary tract stone formation (uric acid calculi occur more commonly).
- Abdominal discomfort caused by renal enlargement.
- Hypertension.
- Progressive renal impairment. End-stage renal failure develops in about 50% of patients by 50–60 years of age.
- Liver cysts (usually clinically insignificant). Rarely cysts in the pancreas, spleen, ovary and other organs.

- Subarachnoid haemorrhage – intracranial aneurysms are more common in APKD patients.
- Mitral valve prolapse in 20%.

## Diagnosis

Clinical examination commonly reveals large irregular kidneys, hypertension and possibly hepatomegaly. A definitive diagnosis is established by ultrasonography. In adults with a family history, criteria for diagnosis are at least two renal cysts in patients aged <30 years, two cysts in each kidney in patients aged 30–59 years and four cysts in each kidney in patient aged >60 years.

## Management

No treatment has definitely been shown to slow disease progression or decrease cyst size. Blood pressure should be carefully controlled and disease progression monitored by serial measurements of serum creatinine. Many patients will eventually require renal replacement by dialysis and/or transplantation. Children and siblings of patients with the disease should be offered screening by renal ultrasonography in their 20s.

### Medullary sponge kidney

Medullary sponge kidney is an uncommon condition characterized by dilatation of the collecting ducts in the papillae, sometimes with cystic change. In severe cases the medullary area has a sponge-like appearance. Small calculi form within the cysts and patients present with renal colic or haematuria. In 20% of patients there is hypercalciuria or renal tubular acidosis (see p. 346). Renal function is usually well preserved. The diagnosis is made by excretion urography.

## TUMOURS OF THE KIDNEY AND GENITOURINARY TRACT

### Renal cell carcinoma

Renal cell carcinomas are the most common renal tumours in adults. Average age at presentation is 55 years with a male : female ratio of 2 : 1. They arise from the proximal tubular epithelium and may be solitary, multiple and occasionally bilateral.

### Clinical features

Haematuria, loin pain and a mass in the flank are the most common presenting features. Other features include malaise, weight loss and fever. Left-sided scrotal varicoceles occur if the renal tumour obstructs the gonadal vein where

it enters the renal vein. Twenty-five per cent have metastases at presentation to bone, liver and the lung. Anaemia or polycythaemia and hypercalcaemia are other findings.

## Investigations

- Ultrasonography will distinguish a simple benign cyst from a more complex cyst or solid tumour.
- CT scanning is more sensitive than ultrasound for detecting a renal mass and will show involvement of the renal vein or inferior vena cava. MRI is better than CT for tumour staging.

A presumptive diagnosis of renal carcinoma is made on imaging studies in patients with isolated solid renal masses and they will usually go straight to surgery (which provides tissue diagnosis and definitive treatment) without further investigation.

## Management

**Localized disease** Radical nephrectomy is the preferred treatment. Partial nephrectomy is used if there is bilateral involvement or the contralateral kidney functions poorly. Ablative techniques (cryoablation or radiofrequency ablation) are used in patients with significant comorbid disease who would not tolerate surgery.

**Metastatic or locally advanced disease** Interleukin-2 and interferon produce a remission in 20% of cases. Targeted therapies which block the vascular endothelial growth factor (sunitinib, sorafenib, bevacizumab) or mTOR (temsirolimus) pathway are used in patients who cannot tolerate or do not respond to this treatment.

## Prognosis

The 5-year survival rate is 60–70% with tumours confined to the renal parenchyma, but less than 5% in those with distant metastases.

## Urothelial tumours

The calyces, renal pelvis, ureter, bladder and urethra are lined by transitional cell epithelium. Bladder tumours are the most common form of transitional cell malignancy. They occur most commonly after the age of 40 years and are four times more common in males. Predisposing factors for bladder cancer include:

- Cigarette smoking
- Exposure to industrial chemicals, e.g.  $\beta$ -naphthylamine, benzidine
- Exposure to drugs, e.g. phenacetin, cyclophosphamide
- Chronic inflammation, e.g. schistosomiasis.

## Clinical features

Patients with bladder cancer usually present with painless haematuria (either visible or non-visible) or sometimes symptoms suggestive of a UTI (frequency, urgency, dysuria) in the absence of bacteriuria. Pain is usually due to locally advanced or metastatic disease but may sometimes occur from clot retention. Transitional cell cancers of the kidney and ureters present with haematuria and flank pain.

## Investigations

Presentation is usually with haematuria and any patient over 40 years of age with haematuria should be assumed to have a urothelial tumour until proven otherwise (Fig. 9.3).

## Management

Pelvic and ureteric tumours are treated with nephroureterectomy. Treatment of bladder tumours depends on the stage, but options include local diathermy or cystoscopic resection, bladder resection, radiotherapy, and local and systemic chemotherapy.

## DISEASES OF THE PROSTATE GLAND

The common diseases of the prostate gland are benign enlargement, carcinoma and prostatitis. Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) is a glycoprotein that is expressed by normal and neoplastic prostate tissue and secreted into the bloodstream. Serum concentrations can be increased in any of these conditions and also after perineal trauma and mechanical manipulation of the prostate (cystoscopy, prostate biopsy or surgery). Serum PSA concentration  $>4.0$  ng/mL is abnormal and can be due to benign disease or cancer. However, prostate cancer is present in 50% of men with a serum PSA  $>10$  ng/mL.

### Benign enlargement of the prostate gland

Benign prostatic enlargement (hypertrophy, BPH) is common particularly after the age of 60 years. There is hyperplasia of both glandular and connective tissue elements of the gland. The aetiology is not known.

## Clinical features

Frequency of micturition, nocturia, delay in initiation of micturition and post-void dribbling are common symptoms. Acute urinary retention or retention with overflow incontinence also occurs. An enlarged smooth prostate may be felt on rectal examination.

## Investigations

Serum electrolytes and renal ultrasonography are performed to exclude renal damage resulting from obstruction. Prostate cancer may present with similar symptoms. Serum PSA may be elevated in benign disease but an elevated value is usually an indication for specialist referral and prostate biopsy.

## Management

Patients with mild symptoms are managed by 'watchful waiting'. Selective  $\alpha_1$ -adrenoceptor antagonists, such as tamsulosin, relax smooth muscle in the bladder neck and prostate producing an increase in urinary flow rate and an improvement in obstructive symptoms. The  $5\alpha$ -reductase inhibitor finasteride blocks conversion of testosterone to dihydrotestosterone (the androgen responsible for prostatic growth) and is an alternative to  $\alpha$ -antagonists, particularly in men with a significantly enlarged prostate. Patients with acute retention of urine or retention with overflow require urethral catheterization or, if this is not possible, suprapubic catheter drainage. Further management is then with prostatectomy or a permanent catheter.

## Prostatic carcinoma

Prostatic adenocarcinoma is common, accounting for 7% of all cancers in men. Malignant change within the prostate is increasingly common with increasing age, being present in 80% of men aged 80 and over. In most cases these malignant foci remain dormant.

## Clinical features

In developed countries many patients now present as a result of screening for prostate cancer by measurement of serum PSA although this is not widely recommended (see later). Presentation is also with symptoms of bladder outflow obstruction identical to those of benign prostatic hypertrophy. Occasionally, presenting symptoms are due to metastases, particularly to bone. In some cases malignancy is unsuspected until histological investigation is carried out on the resected specimen after prostatectomy. Rectal examination may reveal a hard irregular gland.

## Investigation

The diagnosis is made using transrectal ultrasound of the prostate, elevated serum PSA (see above) and transrectal prostate biopsy. If metastases are present serum PSA is usually markedly elevated ( $>16$  ng/mL). Endorectal coil MRI is used to locally stage the tumour.



## Management

Microscopic tumour is sometimes managed by watchful waiting. Treatment of disease confined to the gland is radical prostatectomy or radiotherapy, both resulting in 80–90% 5-year survival. The treatment of metastatic disease depends on removing androgenic drive to the tumour. This is achieved by bilateral orchidectomy, synthetic luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone analogues, e.g. goserelin, or antiandrogens, e.g. cyproterone acetate.

## Screening

Screening for prostate cancer by annual measurement of serum PSA and digital rectal examination reduces the mortality from prostate cancer but the benefit is small and there is the potential for overdiagnosis and treatment-related complications. Most major medical organizations world-wide do not recommend screening for prostate cancer.

## TESTICULAR TUMOUR

Testicular cancer is the most common cancer in young men. More than 96% of testicular tumours arise from germ cells. There are two main types: seminomas and teratomas. The aetiology is unknown and the risk of malignant change is greater in undescended testes.

## Clinical features

Typically the man or his partner finds a painless lump in the testicle. Presentation may also be with metastases in the lungs, causing cough and dyspnoea, or para-aortic lymph nodes, causing back pain.

## Investigations

- Ultrasound scanning will help to differentiate between masses in the body of the testes and other intrascrotal swellings.
- Serum concentrations of the tumour markers  $\alpha$ -fetoprotein (AFP) and/or the  $\beta$  subunit of human chorionic gonadotrophin ( $\beta$ -hCG) are elevated in most men with teratomas. They are used to help make the diagnosis, to assess response to treatment and in following up patients.  $\beta$ -hCG is elevated in a minority of men with seminomas, and AFP is not elevated in men with pure seminomas.
- Tumour staging is assessed by chest X-ray and CT scanning of the chest, abdomen and pelvis.

## Treatment

Orchidectomy is performed to permit histological evaluation of the primary tumour and to provide local tumour control. Seminomas with metastases

below the diaphragm only are treated by radiotherapy. More widespread tumours are treated with chemotherapy. Teratomas with metastases are also treated with chemotherapy. Sperm banking should be offered prior to therapy to men who wish to preserve fertility.

## URINARY INCONTINENCE

### Normal bladder physiology

As the bladder fills with urine, two factors act to ensure continence until it is next emptied:

- Intravesical pressure remains low as a result of stretching of the bladder wall and the stability of the bladder muscle (detrusor), which does not contract involuntarily.
- The sphincter mechanisms of the bladder neck and urethral muscles.

At the onset of voiding the sphincters relax (mediated by decreased sympathetic activity) and the detrusor muscle contracts (mediated by increased parasympathetic activity). Overall control and coordination of micturition is by higher brain centres, which include the cerebral cortex and the pons.

### Stress incontinence

Stress incontinence occurs as a result of sphincter weakness, which may be iatrogenic in men (post-prostatectomy) or the result of childbirth in women. There is a small leak of urine when intra-abdominal pressure rises, e.g. with coughing, laughing or standing up. In young women pelvic floor exercises may help. In post-menopausal women the contributing factor of urethral atrophy may be helped by oestrogen creams.

### Urge incontinence

In urge incontinence there is a strong desire to void and the patient may be unable to hold his or her urine. The usual cause is detrusor instability, which occurs most often in women, and the aetiology is not known. Mild cases may respond to bladder retraining (gradually increasing the time interval between voids). More severe cases are treated with anticholinergic agents, e.g. oxybutynin, which decrease detrusor excitability. Less commonly, urge incontinence is caused by bladder hypersensitivity from local pathology (e.g. UTI, bladder stones, tumours) and treatment is then of the underlying cause.

### Overflow incontinence

Overflow incontinence is most often seen in men with prostatic hypertrophy causing outflow obstruction. There is leakage of small amounts of urine, and on abdominal examination the distended bladder is felt rising out of the pelvis.

If the obstruction is not relieved with urethral or suprapubic catheterization then renal damage will develop.

## Neurological causes

These are usually apparent from the history and examination, which reveal accompanying neurological deficits. Brainstem damage, e.g. trauma, may lead to incoordination of detrusor muscle activity and sphincter relaxation, so that the two contract together during voiding. This results in a high-pressure system with the risk of obstructive uropathy. The aim of treatment is to reduce outflow pressure, either with  $\alpha$ -adrenergic blockers or by sphincterotomy. Autonomic neuropathy, e.g. in diabetic individuals, decreases detrusor excitability and results in a distended atonic bladder with a large residual urine which is liable to infection. Permanent catheterization may be necessary.

In elderly people incontinence may be the result of a combination of factors: diuretic treatment, dementia (antisocial incontinence) and difficulty in getting to the toilet because of immobility.

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# Cardiovascular disease

## COMMON PRESENTING SYMPTOMS OF HEART DISEASE

The common symptoms of heart disease are chest pain, breathlessness, palpitations, syncope, fatigue and peripheral oedema, but none are specific for cardiovascular disease. The severity of anginal pain, dyspnoea, palpitations or fatigue may be classified according to the New York Heart Association grading of 'cardiac status' (Table 10.1).

### Chest pain

Chest pain or discomfort is a common presenting symptom of cardiovascular disease and must be differentiated from non-cardiac causes. The site of pain, its character, radiation and associated symptoms will often point to the cause (Table 10.2)

### Dyspnoea

Causes are discussed on page 407. Left heart failure is the most common cardiac cause of exertional dyspnoea and may also cause orthopnoea and paroxysmal nocturnal dyspnoea (p. 407).

### Palpitations

Palpitations are an awareness of the heartbeat. The normal heartbeat is sensed when the patient is anxious, excited, exercising or lying on the left side. In other circumstances it usually indicates a cardiac arrhythmia, commonly ectopic beats or a paroxysmal tachycardia (p. 420).

### Syncope

This is a temporary impairment of consciousness due to inadequate cerebral blood flow. There are many causes and the most common is a simple faint

**Table 10.1** The New York Heart Association grading of 'cardiac status' (modified)

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Grade 1 | Uncompromised (no breathlessness)         |
| Grade 2 | Slightly compromised (on severe exertion) |
| Grade 3 | Moderately compromised (on mild exertion) |
| Grade 4 | Severely compromised (breathless at rest) |

**Table 10.2** Common causes of chest pain

| Central  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Angina pectoris  | Crushing pain on exercise, relieved by rest. May radiate to jaw or arms                               |  |
| ACS  | Similar in character to angina but more severe, occurs at rest, lasts longer                          |  |
| Pericarditis   | Sharp pain aggravated by movement, respiration and changes in posture                                 |  |
| Aortic dissection  | Severe tearing chest pain radiating through to the back   |  |
| Massive PE   | With dyspnoea, tachycardia and hypotension  |  |
| Musculoskeletal  | Tender to palpate over affected area  |  |
| GORD   | May be exacerbated by bending or lying down (at night). Pain may radiate into the neck                |  |
| Lateral/peripheral   |   |  |
| Pulmonary infarct<br>Pneumonia<br>Pneumothorax   | } Pleuritic pain, i.e. sharp, well-localized, aggravated by inspiration, coughing and movement        |  |
| Musculoskeletal  |   | Sharp, well-localized pain with a tender area on palpation |
| Lung carcinoma   |   | Constant dull pain   |
| Herpes zoster  | Burning unilateral pain corresponding to a dermatome that appears 2 to 3 days before the typical rash |  |
| <i>ACS, acute coronary syndrome; PE, pulmonary embolus; GORD, gastro-oesophageal reflux disease.</i> |   |  |

or vasovagal attack (p. 717). The cardiac causes of syncope are the result of either very fast (e.g. ventricular tachycardia) or very slow heart rates (e.g. complete heart block) which are unable to maintain an adequate cardiac output. Attacks occur suddenly and without warning. They last only 1 or 2 minutes, with complete recovery in seconds (compare with epilepsy, where

complete recovery may be delayed for some hours). Obstruction to ventricular outflow also causes syncope (e.g. aortic stenosis, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy), which typically occurs on exercise when the requirements for increased cardiac output cannot be met.

## Other symptoms

Tiredness and lethargy occur with heart failure and result from poor perfusion of brain and skeletal muscle, poor sleep, side-effects of medication particularly  $\beta$ -blockers, and electrolyte imbalance due to diuretic therapy. Heart failure also causes salt and water retention leading to oedema, which in ambulant patients is most prominent over the ankles. In severe cases it may involve the genitalia and thighs.

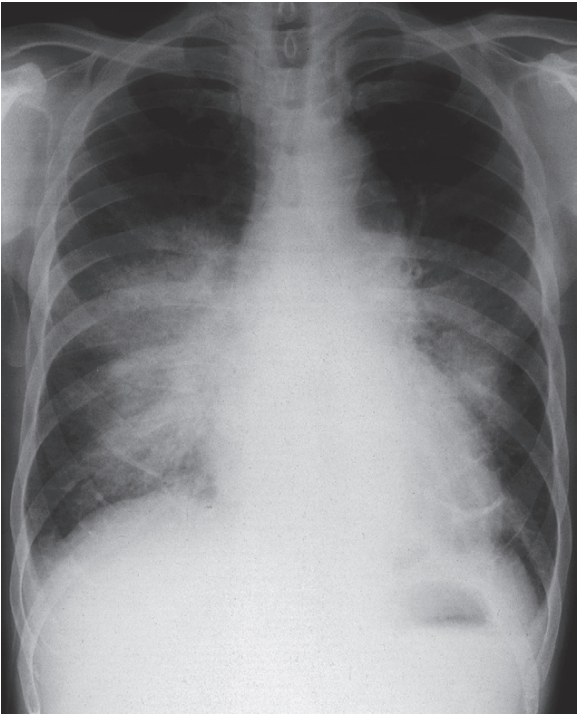
## INVESTIGATIONS IN CARDIAC DISEASE

### The chest X-ray

This is usually taken in the postero-anterior (PA) direction at maximum inspiration (p. 509). A PA chest film can aid the identification of cardiomegaly, pericardial effusions, dissection or dilatation of the aorta, and calcification of the pericardium or heart valves. A cardiothoracic ratio (p. 510) of greater than 50% on a PA film is abnormal and normally indicates cardiac dilatation or pericardial effusion. Examination of the lung fields may show signs of left ventricular failure (Fig. 10.1), valvular heart disease (e.g. markedly enlarged left atrium in mitral valve disease) or pulmonary oligoemia (reduction of vascular markings) associated with pulmonary embolic disease.

### The electrocardiogram

The electrocardiogram (ECG) is a recording from the body surface of the electrical activity of the heart. Each cardiac cell generates an action potential as it becomes depolarized and then repolarized during a normal cycle. Normally, depolarization of cardiac cells proceeds in an orderly fashion beginning in the sinus node (lying in the junction between superior vena cava and right atrium) and spreading sequentially through the atria, AV node (lying beneath the right atrial endocardium within the lower inter-atrial septum), and the His bundle in the interventricular septum, which divides into right and left bundle branches (Fig. 10.2). The right and left bundle branches continue down the right and left side of the interventricular septum and supply the Purkinje network which spreads through the subendocardial surface of the right ventricle and left ventricle respectively. The main left bundle divides into an anterior superior division (the anterior hemi-bundle) and a posterior inferior division (the posterior hemi-bundle).



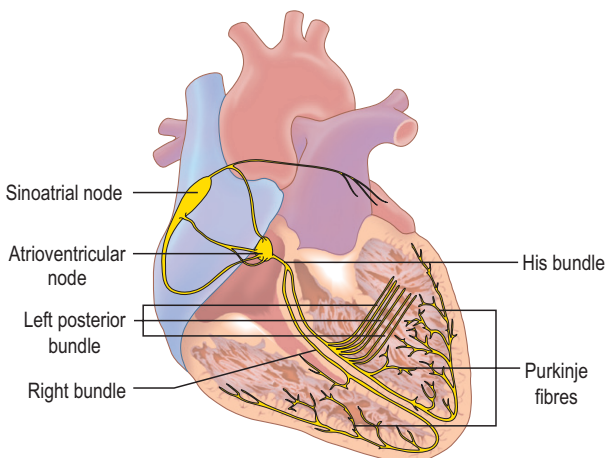
**Fig. 10.1** The chest X-ray in acute left ventricular failure demonstrating cardiomegaly, hilar haziness, Kerley B lines, upper lobe venous blood engorgement and fluid in the right horizontal fissure. Hilar haziness and Kerley B lines (thin linear horizontal pulmonary opacities at the base of the lung periphery) indicate interstitial pulmonary oedema.

The standard ECG has 12 leads:

- Chest leads,  $V_1$ – $V_6$ , look at the heart in a *horizontal plane* (Fig. 10.3).
- Limb leads look at the heart in a *vertical plane* (Fig. 10.4). Limb leads are unipolar (AVR, AVL and AVF) or bipolar (I, II, III).

The ECG machine is arranged so that when a depolarization wave spreads towards a lead the needle moves upwards on the trace (i.e. a positive deflection), and when it spreads away from the lead the needle moves downwards.





**Fig. 10.2** The conducting system of the heart. In normal circumstances only the specialized conducting tissues of the heart undergo spontaneous depolarization (automaticity) which initiates an action potential. The sinus (SA) node discharges more rapidly than the other cells and is the normal pacemaker of the heart. The impulse generated by the sinus node spreads first through the atria, producing atrial systole, and then through the atrioventricular (AV) node to the His-Purkinje system, producing ventricular systole.

## ECG waveform and definitions (Fig. 10.5)

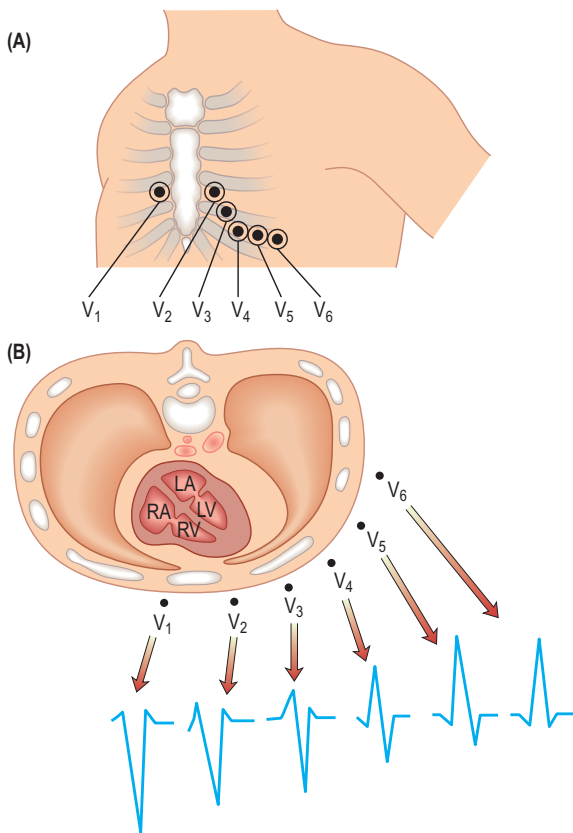
**Heart rate** At normal paper speed (usually 25 mm/s) each 'big square' measures 5 mm wide and is equivalent to 0.2 s. The heart rate (if the rhythm is regular) is calculated by counting the number of big squares between two consecutive R waves and dividing into 300.

P wave is the first deflection and is caused by atrial depolarization. When abnormal it may be:

- Broad and notched ( $>0.12$  s, i.e. 3 small squares) in left atrial enlargement ('P mitrale', e.g. mitral stenosis)
- Tall and peaked ( $>2.5$  mm) in right atrial enlargement ('P pulmonale', e.g. pulmonary hypertension)
- Replaced by flutter or fibrillation waves (p. 429)
- Absent in sinoatrial block (p. 421).

The *QRS complex* represents ventricular activation or depolarization:

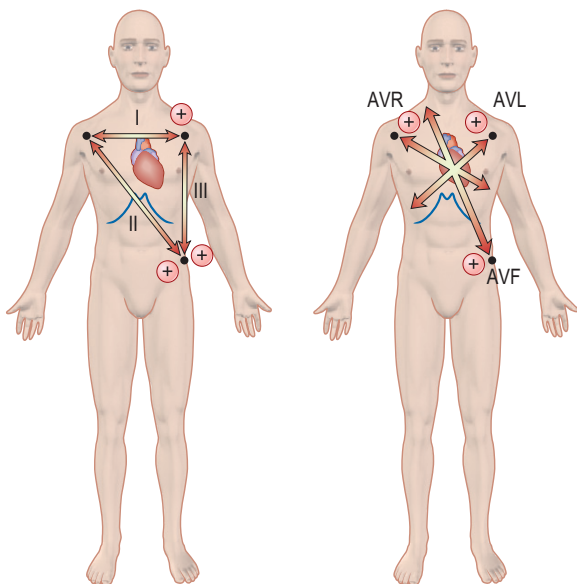
- A negative (downward) deflection preceding an R wave is called a Q wave. Normal Q waves are small and narrow; deep ( $>2$  mm), wide ( $>1$  mm) Q waves (except in AVR and  $V_1$ ) indicate myocardial infarction (p. 453).



**Fig. 10.3** ECG chest leads. (A) The V leads are attached to the chest wall overlying the intercostal spaces as shown: V<sub>4</sub> in the mid-clavicular line, V<sub>5</sub> in the anterior axillary line, V<sub>6</sub> in the mid-axillary line. (B) Leads V<sub>1</sub> and V<sub>2</sub> look at the right ventricle, V<sub>3</sub> and V<sub>4</sub> at the interventricular septum, and V<sub>5</sub> and V<sub>6</sub> at the left ventricle. The normal QRS complex in each lead is shown. The R wave in the chest (precordial) leads steadily increases in amplitude from lead V<sub>1</sub> to V<sub>6</sub> with a corresponding decrease in S wave depth, culminating in a predominantly positive complex in V<sub>6</sub>.

## The bipolar leads

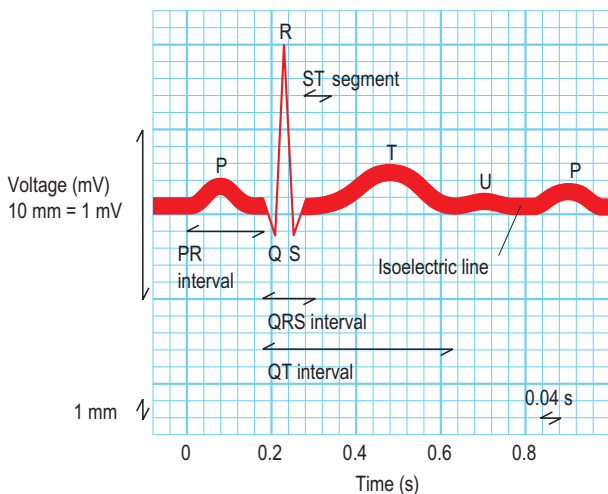
## The augmented unipolar leads



**Fig. 10.4** ECG limb leads. Lead I is derived from electrodes on the right arm (negative pole) and left arm (positive pole), lead II is derived from electrodes on the right arm (negative pole) and left leg (positive pole), and lead III from electrodes on the left arm (negative pole) and the left leg (positive pole).

- A deflection upwards is called an R wave whether or not it is preceded by a Q wave.
- A negative deflection following an R wave is termed an S wave.

Ventricular depolarization starts in the septum and spreads from left to right (Fig. 10.2). Subsequently the main free walls of the ventricles are depolarized. Thus, in the right ventricular leads ( $V_1$  and  $V_2$ ) the first deflection is upwards (R wave) as the septal depolarization wave spreads towards those leads. The second deflection is downwards (S wave) as the bigger left ventricle (in which depolarization is spreading away) outweighs the effect of the right ventricle (see Fig. 10.3). The opposite pattern is seen in the left ventricular leads ( $V_5$  and  $V_6$ ), with an initial downwards deflection (small Q wave reflecting septal depolarization) followed by a large R wave caused by left ventricular depolarization.



**Fig. 10.5** The waves and elaboration of the normal ECG. (From Goldman MJ (1976) *Principles of Clinical Electrocardiography, 9th edn.* Los Altos: Lange.)

*Left ventricular hypertrophy* with increased bulk of the left ventricular myocardium (e.g. with systemic hypertension) increases the voltage-induced depolarization of the free wall of the left ventricle. This gives rise to tall R waves (>25 mm) in the left ventricular leads ( $V_5$ ,  $V_6$ ) and/or deep S waves (>30 mm) in the right ventricular leads ( $V_1$ ,  $V_2$ ). The sum of the R wave in the left ventricular leads and the S wave in the right ventricular leads exceeds 40 mm. In addition to these changes there may also be ST-segment depression and T wave flattening or inversion in the left ventricular leads.

*Right ventricular hypertrophy* (e.g. in pulmonary hypertension) causes tall R waves in the right ventricular leads.

The *QRS duration* reflects the time that excitation takes to spread through the ventricle. A wide QRS complex (>0.10 s, 2.5 small squares) occurs if conduction is delayed, e.g. with right or left bundle branch block, or if conduction is through a pathway other than the right and left bundle branches, e.g. an impulse generated by an abnormal focus of activity in the ventricle (ventricular ectopic).

*T waves* result from ventricular repolarization. In general the direction of the T wave is the same as that of the QRS complex. Inverted T waves occur in many conditions and, although usually abnormal, they are a non-specific finding.

The *PR interval* is measured from the start of the P wave to the start of the QRS complex whether this is a Q wave or an R wave. It is the time taken

for excitation to pass from the sinus node, through the atrium, atrioventricular node and His-Purkinje system to the ventricle. A prolonged PR interval ( $>0.22$  s) indicates heart block (p. 422).

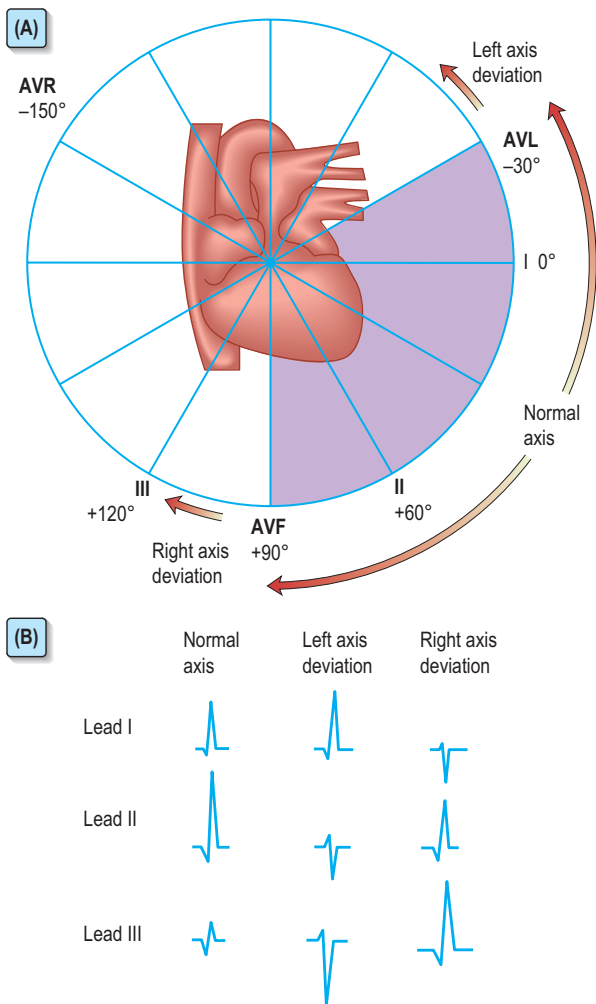
The *ST segment* is the period between the end of the QRS complex and the start of the T wave. ST elevation ( $>1$  mm above the isoelectric line) occurs in the early stages of myocardial infarction (p. 453) and with acute pericarditis (p. 479). ST segment depression ( $>0.5$  mm below the isoelectric line) indicates myocardial ischaemia.

The *QT interval* extends from the start of the QRS complex to the end of the T wave. It is primarily a measure of the time taken for repolarization of the ventricular myocardium, which is dependent on heart rate (shorter at faster heart rates). The QT interval, corrected for heart rate ( $QT_c = QT/\sqrt{R-R}$ ), is normally  $\leq 0.44$  s in males and  $\leq 0.46$  s in females. Long QT syndrome (p. 432) is associated with an increased risk of torsades de pointes ventricular tachycardia and sudden death.

The *cardiac axis* refers to the overall direction of the wave of ventricular depolarization in the vertical plane measured from a zero reference point (Fig. 10.6). The normal range for the cardiac axis is between  $-30^\circ$  and  $+90^\circ$ . An axis more negative than  $-30^\circ$  is termed left axis deviation and an axis more positive than  $+90^\circ$  is termed right axis deviation. A simple method to calculate the axis is by inspection of the QRS complex in leads I, II and III. The axis is normal if leads I and II are positive; there is right axis deviation if lead I is negative and lead III positive, and left axis deviation if lead I is positive and leads II and III negative. Left axis deviation occurs due to a block of the anterior bundle of the main left bundle conducting system (p. 409), inferior myocardial infarction and the Wolff–Parkinson–White syndrome. Right axis deviation may be normal and occurs in conditions in which there is right ventricular overload, dextrocardia, Wolff–Parkinson–White syndrome and left posterior hemiblock.

## Exercise electrocardiography

This assesses the cardiac response to exercise. The 12-lead ECG and blood pressure is recorded whilst the patient walks or runs on a motorized treadmill. The test is performed according to a standardized method (e.g. the Bruce protocol). Myocardial ischaemia provoked by exertion results in ST segment depression ( $>1$  mm) in leads facing the affected area of ischaemic cardiac muscle. Exercise normally causes an increase in heart rate and blood pressure. A sustained fall in blood pressure usually indicates severe coronary artery disease. A slow recovery of the heart rate to basal levels has also been reported to be a predictor of mortality. Contraindications include unstable angina, severe hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, severe aortic stenosis and malignant hypertension. A submaximal exercise test can be performed within 4 days of a myocardial infarction. A positive test and indications for stopping the test are:



**Fig. 10.6** Cardiac vectors. (A) The hexaxial reference system, illustrating the six leads in the frontal plane, e.g. lead I is 0°, lead II is +60°, lead III is 120°. (B) ECG leads showing the predominant positive and negative deflection with axis deviation.

- Chest pain
- ST segment depression or elevation >1 mm
- Fall in systolic blood pressure >20 mmHg
- Fall in heart rate despite an increase in workload
- BP >240/110
- Significant arrhythmias or increased frequency of ventricular ectopics.

## 24-Hour ambulatory taped electrocardiography

A 12-lead ECG is recorded continuously over a 24-hour period and is used to record transient changes such as a brief paroxysm of tachycardia, an occasional pause in rhythm or intermittent ST segment shifts. It is also called 'Holter' electrocardiography after its inventor. Event recording is used to record less frequent arrhythmias in which the patient triggers ECG recording at the time of symptoms. They are both outpatient investigations.

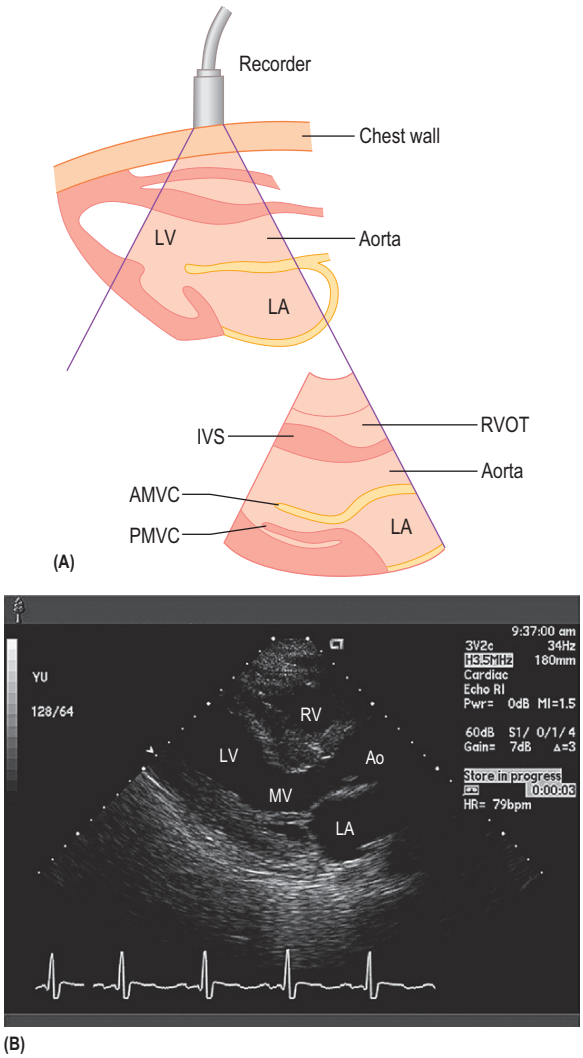
## Tilt testing

This is performed to investigate unexplained syncope when cardiac (usually echocardiogram and 24-hour ECG) and other tests have not provided a diagnosis. It is specifically used to diagnose neurocardiogenic (vasovagal) syncope in which patients give a history of repeated episodes of syncope which occur without warning and are followed by a rapid recovery. The patient lies on a swivel motorized table in a flat position with safety straps applied across the chest and legs to hold them in position. Blood pressure, heart rate, symptoms and ECG are recorded after the table is tilted +60° to the vertical for 10–60 minutes – thus simulating going from a flat to an upright position. Reproduction of symptoms, bradycardia or hypotension indicates a positive test.

## Echocardiography

This is an ultrasound examination of the heart (Fig. 10.7). Different modalities (e.g. M mode, two- and three-dimensional) are used to provide information about cardiac structure and function. The examination is performed in two ways:

- *Transthoracic echo* is the most common method and involves the placement of a handheld transducer on the chest wall. Ultrasound pulses are emitted through various body tissues, and reflected waves are detected by the transducer as an echo. The commonest reasons for undertaking an echocardiogram are to assess ventricular function in patients with symptoms suggestive of heart failure, or to assess valvular disease. Left ventricular function is assessed by the ejection fraction (percentage of



**Fig. 10.7** Echocardiogram: an example of a two-dimensional long-axis view. (A) Diagram showing the anatomy of the area scanned and a diagrammatic representation of the echocardiogram. (B) Two-dimensional long-axis view.



blood ejected from the left ventricle with each heartbeat) – normally >50%.

- *Transoesophageal echo* uses miniaturized transducers incorporated into special endoscopes. It allows better visualization of some structures and pathology, e.g. aortic dissection, prosthetic valve endocarditis.

Further refinements of the echocardiogram are Doppler and stress echocardiography. Doppler echocardiography uses the Doppler principle (in this case, the frequency of ultrasonic waves reflected from blood cells is related to their velocity and direction of flow) to identify and assess the severity of valve lesions, estimate cardiac output and assess coronary blood flow. Stress (exercise or pharmacological) echocardiography is used to assess myocardial wall motion as a surrogate for coronary artery perfusion. It is used in the detection of coronary artery disease, assessment of risk post-myocardial infarction and perioperatively, and in patients in whom routine exercise ECG testing is non-diagnostic. For those who cannot exercise, pharmacological intervention with dobutamine is used to increase myocardial oxygen demand.

## Cardiac nuclear imaging

This is used to detect myocardial infarction or to measure myocardial function, perfusion or viability, depending on the radiopharmaceutical used and the technique of imaging. A variety of radiotracers can be injected intravenously and these diffuse freely into myocardial tissue or attach to red blood cells.

Thallium-201 is taken up by cardiac myocytes. Ischaemic areas (produced by exercising the patient) with reduced tracer uptake are seen as ‘cold spots’ when imaged with a  $\gamma$  camera.

Technetium-99m is used to label red blood cells and produce images of the left ventricle during systole and diastole.

## Cardiac computed tomography (CT)

CT is useful for the assessment of the thoracic aorta and mediastinum and multidetector thin slice scanners can assess calcium content of coronary arteries as an indicator of the presence and severity of coronary artery stenoses. CT coronary angiography has high sensitivity for the detection of coronary artery diseases and may become part of the assessment of patients presenting with acute chest pain to look for aortic dissection, pulmonary embolism as well as coronary artery disease.

## Cardiovascular magnetic resonance (CMR)

CMR is a non-invasive imaging technique that does not involve harmful radiation. It is increasingly utilized in the investigation of cardiovascular

disease to provide both anatomical and functional information. Contraindications are permanent pacemaker or defibrillator, intracerebral clips and significant claustrophobia. Coronary stents and prosthetic valves are not a contraindication.

## Cardiac catheterization

A small catheter is passed through a peripheral vein (for study of right-sided heart structures) or artery (for study of left-sided heart structures) into the heart, permitting the securing of blood samples, measurement of intracardiac pressures and determination of cardiac anomalies. Specially designed catheters are then used to selectively engage the left and right coronary arteries, and contrast cine-angiograms are taken in order to define the coronary circulation and identify the presence and severity of any coronary artery disease. Coronary artery stenoses can be dilated (angioplasty) and metal stents also placed to reduce the rate of restenosis – this is referred to as percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI). A further development is the introduction of stents coated with drugs (sirolimus or paclitaxel) to reduce cellular proliferation and restenosis rates still further. However, there is a risk of late-stent thrombosis.

## CARDIAC ARRHYTHMIAS

An abnormality of cardiac rhythm is called a cardiac arrhythmia. Arrhythmia may cause sudden death, syncope, dizziness, palpitations or no symptoms at all. Paroxysmal arrhythmias may not be detected on a single ECG recording. Twenty-four-hour ambulatory ECG monitoring and event recorders (p. 417) are often used to detect arrhythmias causing intermittent symptoms.

There are two main types of arrhythmia:

- *Bradycardia*: the heart rate is slow (< 60 beats/min). Slower heart rates are more likely to cause symptomatic arrhythmias.
- *Tachycardia*: the heart rate is fast (> 100 beats/min). Tachycardias are more likely to be symptomatic when the arrhythmia is fast and sustained. They are subdivided into *supraventricular tachycardias* (SVTs), which arise from the atrium or the atrioventricular junction, and *ventricular tachycardias*, which arise from the ventricles.

Arrhythmias and conduction disturbances complicating acute myocardial infarction are discussed on page 456.

### General principles of management of arrhythmias

Patients with adverse symptoms and signs (low cardiac output with cold clammy extremities, hypotension, impaired consciousness or severe pulmonary oedema) require urgent treatment of their arrhythmia. Oxygen is given to all patients, intravenous access established and serum electrolyte abnormalities (potassium, magnesium, calcium) are corrected.

## Sinus rhythms

The normal cardiac pacemaker is the sinus node (p. 409) with the rate of sinus node discharge under control of the autonomic nervous system with parasympathetic predominating (resulting in slowing of the spontaneous discharge rate).

### Sinus arrhythmia

Fluctuations of autonomic tone result in phasic changes in the sinus discharge rate. During inspiration parasympathetic tone falls and the heart rate quickens, and on expiration the heart rate falls. This variation is normal, particularly in children and young adults, and typically results in predictable irregularities of the pulse.

## Bradycardia

### Sinus bradycardia

Sinus bradycardia is normal during sleep and in well-trained athletes. Causes are:

- *Extrinsic to the heart:* drug therapy ( $\beta$ -blockers, digitalis and other antiarrhythmic drugs), hypothyroidism, hypothermia, cholestatic jaundice, raised intracranial pressure. Treatment of symptomatic bradycardia is that of the underlying cause.
- *Intrinsic to the heart:* acute ischaemia and infarction of the sinus node (as a complication of myocardial infarction) and chronic degenerative changes such as fibrosis of the atrium and sinus node (sick sinus syndrome) occurring in elderly people. Patients with persistent symptomatic bradycardia are treated with a permanent cardiac pacemaker. First-line treatment in the acute situation with adverse signs (p. 420), is atropine (500  $\mu$ g intravenously repeated to a maximum of 3 mg, but contraindicated in myasthenia gravis and paralytic ileus). Temporary pacing (transcutaneous, or transvenous if expertise available) is an alternative.
- *Sick sinus syndrome.* Bradycardia is caused by intermittent failure of sinus node depolarization (sinus arrest) or failure of the sinus impulse to propagate through the perinodal tissue to the atria (sinoatrial block). The slow heart rate predisposes to ectopic pacemaker activity and tachyarrhythmias are common (tachy-brady syndrome). The ECG shows severe sinus bradycardia or intermittent long pauses between consecutive P waves (>2 s, dropped P waves). Permanent pacemaker insertion is indicated in symptomatic patients. Antiarrhythmic drugs are used to treat tachycardias. Thromboembolism is common in sinus node dysfunction and patients are anticoagulated unless there is a contraindication.

- Neurally mediated, e.g. carotid sinus syndrome and vasovagal attacks, resulting in bradycardia and syncope.

## Heart block

The common causes of heart block are coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathy and, particularly in elderly people, fibrosis of the conducting tissue. Block in either the atrioventricular (AV) node or the His bundle results in AV block, whereas block lower in the conduction system (p. 411) produces right or left bundle branch block.

### Atrioventricular block

There are three forms:

**First-degree AV block** This is the result of delayed atrioventricular conduction and reflected by a prolonged PR interval ( $>0.22$  s) on the ECG. No change in heart rate occurs and treatment is unnecessary.

**Second-degree AV block** This occurs when some atrial impulses fail to reach the ventricles.

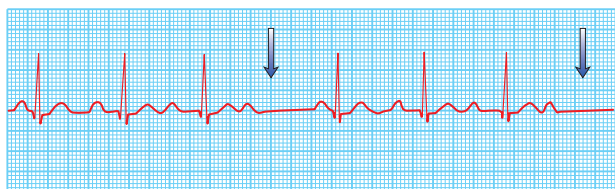
There are several forms (Fig. 10.8):

- *Mobitz type I block* (Wenckebach block phenomenon) is progressive PR interval prolongation until a P wave fails to conduct, i.e. absent QRS after the P wave. The PR interval then returns to normal and the cycle repeats itself.
- *Mobitz type II block* occurs when a dropped QRS complex is not preceded by progressive PR prolongation. Usually the QRS complex is wide.
- *2:1 or 3:1 (advanced) block* occurs when only every second or third P wave conducts to the ventricles.

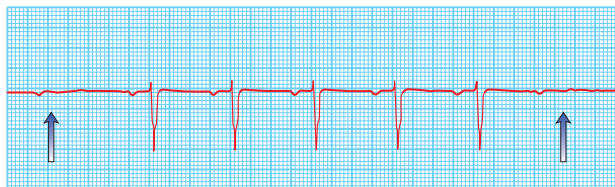
Progression from second-degree AV block to complete heart block occurs more frequently following acute anterior myocardial infarction and in Mobitz type II block, and treatment is with a cardiac pacemaker. Patients with Wenckebach AV block or those with second-degree block following acute inferior infarction are usually monitored.

**Third-degree AV block** Complete heart block occurs when all atrial activity fails to conduct to the ventricles. There is no association between atrial and ventricular activity; P waves and QRS complexes occur independently of one another on the ECG. Ventricular contractions are maintained by a spontaneous escape rhythm originating below the site of the block in the:

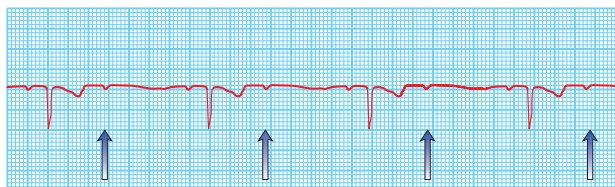
- *His bundle* (p. 411) – which gives rise to a narrow complex QRS ( $<0.12$  s) at a rate of 50–60 b.p.m. and is relatively reliable. Recent onset block due to transient causes, e.g. ischaemia, may respond to intravenous atropine (p. 421) without the need for pacing. Chronic narrow-complex AV block usually requires permanent pacing.
- *His-Purkinje system* (i.e. distally) – gives rise to a broad QRS complex ( $>0.12$  s), is slow ( $<40$  b.p.m.), unreliable and often associated with



(A)



(B)



(C)

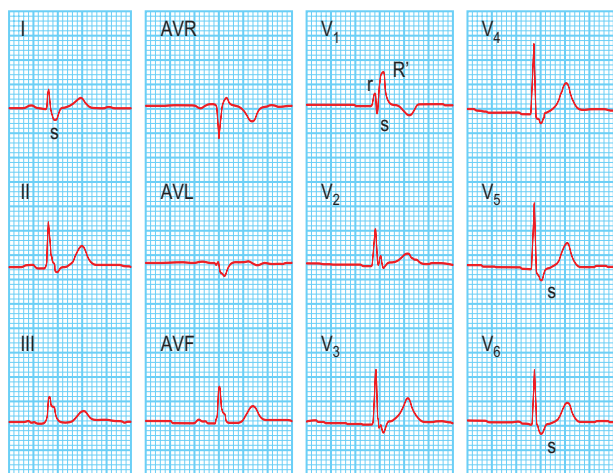
**Fig. 10.8** Three varieties of second-degree atrioventricular (AV) block. (A) Wenckebach (Mobitz type I) AV block. The PR interval gradually prolongs until the P wave does not conduct to the ventricles (arrows). (B) Mobitz type II AV block. The P waves that do not conduct to the ventricles (arrows) are not preceded by gradual PR interval prolongation. (C) Two P waves to each QRS complex. The PR interval prior to the dropped P wave is always the same. It is not possible to define this type of AV block as type I or type II Mobitz block and it is, therefore, a third variety of second-degree AV block (arrows show P waves), not conducted to the ventricles.

dizziness and blackouts (Stokes–Adams attacks). Permanent pacemaker insertion is indicated.

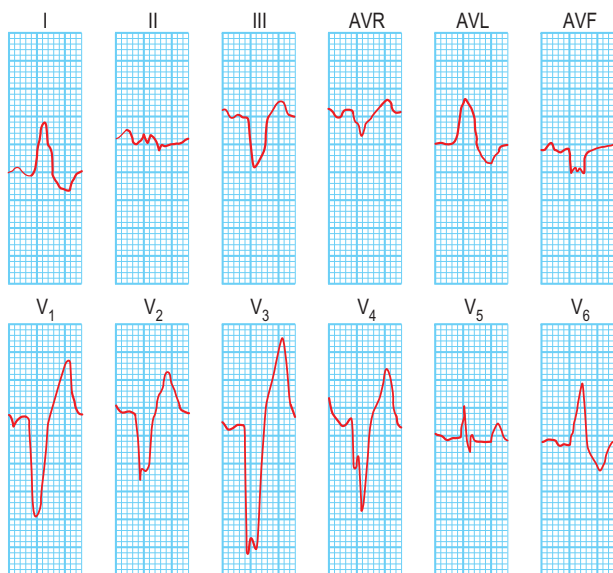
### Bundle branch block

Complete block of a bundle branch (Fig. 10.2) is associated with a wide QRS complex ( $\geq 0.12$  s) with an abnormal pattern and is usually asymptomatic. The shape of the QRS depends on whether the right or the left bundle is blocked (Fig 10.9):

- Right bundle branch block (RBBB) – the right bundle branch no longer conducts an impulse and the two ventricles do not receive an impulse



(A)



(B)

**Fig 10.9** A 12-lead ECG showing (A) right bundle branch block. Note an rsR pattern with the tall R in lead  $V_1$ – $V_2$  and the broad S waves in leads I and  $V_5$  and  $V_6$ . (B) left bundle branch block. The QRS duration is greater than 0.12 s. Note the broad notched R waves with ST depression in leads I, AVL and  $V_6$ , and the broad QRS waves in  $V_1$ – $V_3$ .

simultaneously. There is sequential spread of an impulse (i.e. first the left ventricle and then the right) resulting in a secondary R wave (RSR') in  $V_1$  and a slurred S wave in  $V_5$  and  $V_6$ . RBBB occurs in normal healthy individuals, pulmonary embolus, right ventricular hypertrophy, ischaemic heart disease and congenital heart disease, e.g. atrial and ventricular septal defect and Fallot's tetralogy.

- Left bundle branch block (LBBB) – the opposite occurs with an RSR' pattern in the left ventricular leads (I, AVL,  $V_4$ – $V_6$ ) and deep slurred S waves in  $V_1$  and  $V_2$ . LBBB indicates underlying cardiac pathology and occurs in ischaemic heart disease, left ventricular hypertrophy, aortic valve disease and following cardiac surgery.

## Supraventricular tachycardias

These arise from the atrium or the atrioventricular junction. Conduction is via the His-Purkinje system and the QRS shape during tachycardia is usually similar to that seen in the same patient during baseline rhythm.

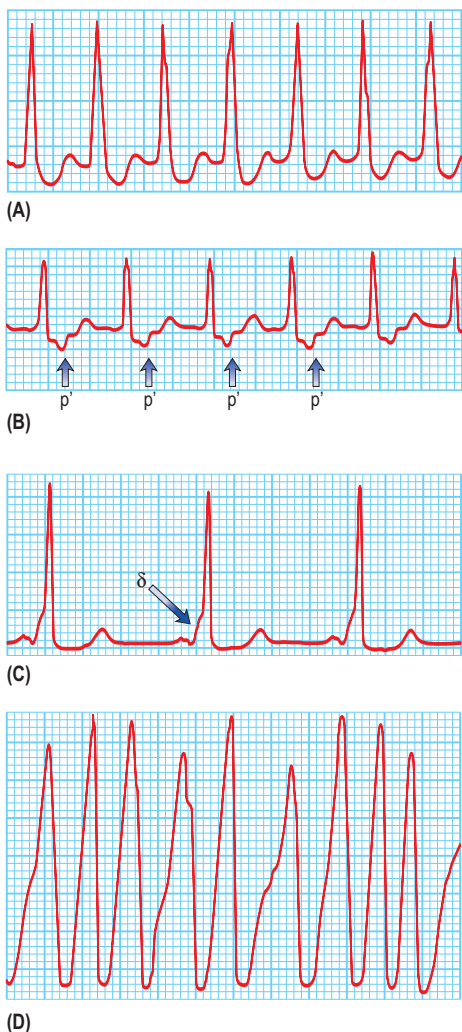
### Sinus tachycardia

Sinus tachycardia is a physiological response during exercise and excitement. It also occurs with fever, anaemia, heart failure, thyrotoxicosis, acute pulmonary embolism, hypovolaemia and drugs (e.g. catecholamines and atropine). Treatment is aimed at correction of the underlying cause. If necessary,  $\beta$ -blockers may be used to slow the sinus rate, e.g. in hyperthyroidism.

### Atrioventricular junctional tachycardias

Tachycardia arises as a result of re-entry circuits in which there are two separate pathways for impulse conduction. They are usually referred to as paroxysmal SVTs and are often seen in young patients with no evidence of structural heart disease.

**Atrioventricular nodal re-entry tachycardia** (AVNRT) is the commonest type of SVT. It is due to the presence of a 'ring' of conducting pathway in the atrioventricular (AV) node of which the 'limbs' have differing conduction times and refractory periods. This allows a re-entry circuit and an impulse to produce a circus movement tachycardia. On the ECG, the P waves are either not visible or are seen immediately before or after the QRS complex (Fig. 10.10). The QRS complex is usually of normal shape because the ventricles are activated in the normal way, down the bundle of His. Occasionally



**Fig. 10.10** Atrioventricular junctional tachycardia. (A) Atrioventricular nodal re-entry tachycardia. The QRS complexes are narrow and the P waves cannot be seen. (B) Atrioventricular re-entry tachycardia (Wolff–Parkinson–White syndrome). The tachycardia P waves (arrows) are clearly seen after narrow QRS complexes. (C) An electrocardiogram taken in a patient with Wolff–Parkinson–White (WPW) syndrome during sinus rhythm. Note the short PR interval and the  $\delta$  wave (arrow). (D) Atrial fibrillation in the WPW syndrome. Note tachycardia with broad QRS complexes with fast and irregular ventricular rate.



**Table 10.3** Clinical indicators for the identification of sustained ventricular tachycardia (12-lead ECG) in a patient presenting with wide complex tachycardia**Ventricular tachycardia is more likely than supraventricular tachycardia with:**

History of ischaemic heart disease

QRS interval &gt; 140 ms

Atrioventricular dissociation – P waves have no relationship to the QRS complexes

Capture complexes – intermittent normal QRS complex

RS interval &gt; 100 ms

Bifid, upright QRS complex with a taller first peak in V<sub>1</sub>Deep S wave in V<sub>6</sub>Concordant QRS direction in leads V<sub>1</sub>–V<sub>6</sub>, i.e. all positive or all negative complexes

the QRS complex is wide, because of a rate-related bundle branch block, and it may be difficult to distinguish from ventricular tachycardia (Table 10.3).

**Atrioventricular reciprocating tachycardia** (AVRT) is due to the presence of an accessory pathway that connects the atria and ventricles and is capable of antegrade or retrograde conduction, or in some cases both. Wolff–Parkinson–White syndrome is the best-known type of AVRT in which there is an accessory pathway (bundle of Kent) between atria and ventricles. The resting ECG in Wolff–Parkinson–White syndrome shows evidence of the pathway's existence if the path allows some of the atrial depolarization to pass quickly to the ventricle before it gets through the AV node. The early depolarization of part of the ventricle leads to a shortened PR interval and a slurred start to the QRS (delta wave). The QRS is narrow (Fig. 10.10). These patients are also prone to atrial and occasionally ventricular fibrillation.

## Symptoms

The usual history is of rapid regular palpitations usually with abrupt onset and sudden termination. Other symptoms are dizziness, dyspnoea, central chest pain and syncope. Exertion, coffee, tea or alcohol may aggravate the arrhythmia.

## Acute management

The aim of treatment is to restore and maintain sinus rhythm:

- *Unstable patient* – emergency cardioversion is required in patients whose arrhythmia is accompanied by adverse symptoms and signs (p. 420).

- *Haemodynamically stable patient:*
  - Increase vagal stimulation of the sinus node by the Valsalva manoeuvre (ask the patient to blow into a 20-mL syringe with enough force to push back the plunger) or right carotid sinus massage (contraindicated in the presence of a carotid bruit).
  - Adenosine (p. 490) is a very short-acting AV nodal-blocking drug that will terminate most junctional tachycardias. Other treatments are intravenous verapamil (p. 501) or  $\beta$ -blockers, e.g. metoprolol. Verapamil is contraindicated with  $\beta$ -blockers, if the QRS is wide and therefore differentiation from VT difficult or if there is AF and an accessory pathway.

## Long-term management

Radiofrequency ablation of the accessory pathway via a cardiac catheter is successful in about 95% of cases. Flecainide, verapamil, sotalol and amiodarone are the drugs most commonly used.

## Atrial tachyarrhythmias

Atrial fibrillation, flutter, tachycardia and ectopic beats all arise from the atrial myocardium. In some cases automaticity is acquired by damaged atrial cells. They share common aetiologies (Table 10.4). Baseline investigations in a patient with an atrial arrhythmia include an ECG, thyroid function tests and transthoracic echocardiogram.

**Table 10.4** Causes of atrial arrhythmias

|   |
|---|
| Ischaemic heart disease                             |
| Rheumatic heart disease                             |
| Thyrotoxicosis                                      |
| Cardiomyopathy                                      |
| Lone atrial fibrillation (i.e. no cause discovered) |
| Wolff–Parkinson–White syndrome                      |
| Pneumonia   |
| Atrial septal defect                                |
| Carcinoma of the bronchus                           |
| Pericarditis  |
| Pulmonary embolus                                   |
| Acute and chronic alcohol use                       |
| Cardiac surgery                                     |

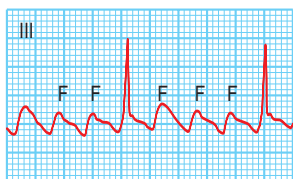
## Atrial fibrillation (AF)

This is the most common arrhythmia and occurs in 5–10% of patients over 65 years of age. It also occurs, particularly in a paroxysmal form, in younger patients. Atrial activity is chaotic and mechanically ineffective. The AV node conducts a proportion of the atrial impulses to produce an irregular ventricular response – giving rise to an irregularly irregular pulse. In some patients it is an incidental finding; in others symptoms range from palpitations and fatigue to acute heart failure. AF is associated with a five-fold increased risk of stroke, primarily as a result of embolism of a thrombus that has formed in the atrium. There are no clear P waves on the ECG (Fig. 10.11), only a fine oscillation of the baseline (so-called fibrillation or f waves).

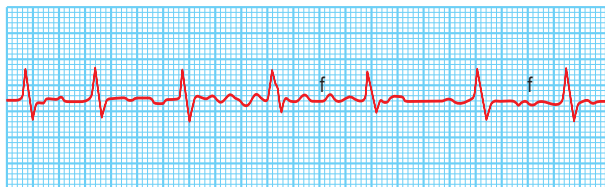
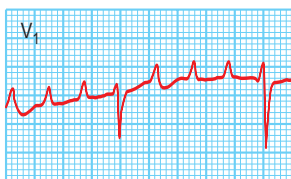
## Management

When AF is caused by an acute precipitating event, such as alcohol toxicity, chest infection or hyperthyroidism, the underlying cause should be treated:

- *Haemodynamically unstable patient* (p. 420) – immediate heparinization and attempted cardioversion with a synchronized DC shock (p. 489). If cardioversion fails or AF recurs, intravenous amiodarone is given (p. 491) before a further attempt at cardioversion. A second dose of amiodarone can be given.



(A)



(B)

**Fig. 10.11** (A) Atrial flutter. The flutter waves are marked with an F, only half of which are transmitted to the ventricles. (B) Atrial fibrillation. There are no P waves; the ventricular response is fast and irregular.

- *Stable patient* – two strategies are available for the long-term management of AF: rate control or rhythm control (i.e. conversion to, and maintaining sinus rhythm):
  - *Rate control* aims to reduce heart rate at rest and during exercise but the patient remains in AF.  $\beta$ -blockers (p. 495) or calcium antagonists (verapamil, diltiazem, p. 501) are the preferred treatment except in predominantly sedentary people where digoxin (p. 493) is used.
  - *Rhythm control* is generally appropriate in younger patients (i.e. < 65 years of age), patients who are highly symptomatic, patients who also have congestive heart failure, and individuals with recent onset AF (< 48 h). Conversion to sinus rhythm is achieved by electrical DC cardioversion (p. 489) and then administration of  $\beta$ -blockers to suppress the arrhythmia. Other agents used depend on the presence (use amiodarone) or absence (sotalol, flecainide, propafenone) of underlying heart disease. Catheter ablation techniques such as pulmonary vein isolation are used in patients who do not respond to antiarrhythmic drugs. Patients with infrequent symptomatic paroxysms of AF (< 1/month) which are haemodynamically well tolerated and whom have little underlying heart disease, are treated on an as-needed basis ('pill in the pocket') with oral flecainide (p. 492) or propafenone.

## Assessment for anticoagulation

AF is associated with an increased risk of thromboembolism, and anticoagulation with warfarin should be given for at least 3 weeks before (with the exception of those who require emergency cardioversion or new onset AF < 48 h duration) and 4 weeks after cardioversion. Most patients should also be anticoagulated (INR 2.0–3.0) long term; the exception being young patients (< 65 years) with lone AF, i.e. in the absence of demonstrable cardiac disease, diabetes or hypertension. This latter group has a low incidence of thromboembolism and is treated with aspirin alone.

## Atrial flutter

Atrial flutter is often associated with AF. The atrial rate is typically 300 beats/min and the AV node usually conducts every second flutter beat, giving a ventricular rate of 150 beats/min. The ECG (Fig. 10.11) characteristically shows 'sawtooth' flutter waves (F waves), which are most clearly seen when AV conduction is transiently impaired by carotid sinus massage or drugs. The treatment of atrial flutter is similar to AF except that most cases of flutter can be cured by radiofrequency catheter ablation of the re-entry circuit.

## Atrial ectopic beats

These are caused by premature discharge of an ectopic atrial focus. On the ECG this produces an early and abnormal P wave, usually followed by a normal QRS complex. Treatment is not usually required unless they cause

troublesome palpitations or are responsible for provoking more significant arrhythmias when  $\beta$ -blockers may be effective.

## Ventricular tachyarrhythmias

### Ventricular ectopic premature beats (extrasystoles)

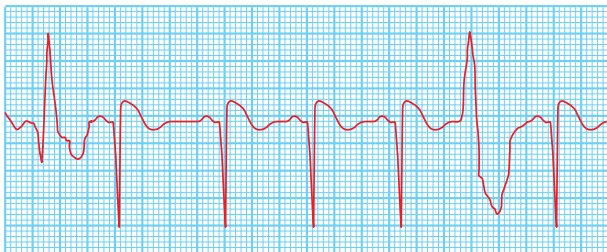
These are asymptomatic or patients complain of extra beats, missed beats or heavy beats. The ectopic electrical activity is not conducted to the ventricles through the normal conducting tissue and thus the QRS complex on the ECG is widened, with a bizarre configuration (Fig. 10.12). Treatment is with  $\beta$ -blockers if symptomatic.

### Sustained ventricular tachycardia

Ventricular tachycardia (VT) and ventricular fibrillation (VF) are usually associated with underlying heart disease. The ECG in sustained VT ( $>30$  s) shows a rapid ventricular rhythm with broad abnormal QRS complexes. Supraventricular tachycardia with bundle branch block also produces a broad complex tachycardia which can usually be differentiated from VT on ECG criteria (Table 10.3). However, the majority of broad complex tachycardias are VT and if in doubt treat as such. Urgent DC cardioversion is necessary if the patient is haemodynamically compromised (p. 420). If there is no haemodynamic compromise, treatment of VT is usually with intravenous lidocaine (p. 492) or amiodarone (p. 491). Recurrence is prevented with  $\beta$ -blockers or an implantable cardioverter–defibrillator (ICD). This is a small device implanted behind the rectus abdominis and connected to the heart; it recognizes VT or VF and automatically delivers a defibrillation shock to the heart.

### Non-sustained ventricular tachycardia

This is defined as VT  $\geq 5$  consecutive beats but lasting  $<30$  s. It is common in patients with heart disease (and in a few individuals with normal hearts). The treatments indicated are  $\beta$ -blockers in symptomatic patients or an ICD



**Fig. 10.12** A rhythm strip demonstrating two ventricular ectopic beats of different morphology (multimorphological).

in patients with poor left ventricular function (ejection fraction <30%) in whom it improves survival.

### Ventricular fibrillation (VF)

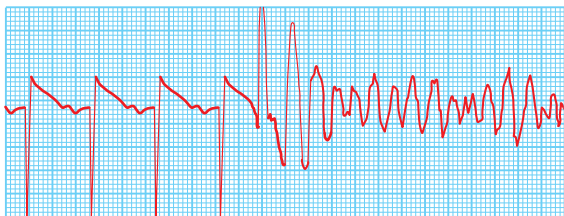
This is a very rapid and irregular ventricular activation (see Fig. 10.13) with no mechanical effect and hence no cardiac output. The patient is pulseless and becomes rapidly unconscious, and respiration ceases (cardiac arrest). Treatment is immediate defibrillation (Emergency Box 10.1). Survivors of VF are, in the absence of an identifiable reversible cause (e.g. during the first two days of acute myocardial infarction, severe metabolic disturbance), at high risk of sudden death and treatment is with an ICD (p. 431).

### Long QT syndrome

Ventricular repolarization (QT interval) is greatly prolonged (p. 415). The causes include congenital (mutations in sodium and potassium channel genes), electrolyte disturbances (hypokalaemia, hypocalcaemia, hypomagnesaemia) and a variety of drugs (e.g. tricyclic antidepressants, phenothiazines and macrolide antibiotics). Symptoms are palpitations and syncope, as a result of a polymorphic VT (torsade de pointes, rapid irregular sharp QRS complexes that continuously change from an upright to an inverted position on the ECG), that usually terminates spontaneously but may degenerate into VF. In acquired cases treatment is that of the underlying cause and intravenous isoprenaline.

### Cardiac arrest

In cardiac arrest there is no effective cardiac output. The patient is unconscious and apnoeic with absent arterial pulses (best felt in the carotid artery in the neck). Irreversible brain damage occurs within 3 minutes if an adequate circulation is not established. Management is described in



**Fig. 10.13** A rhythm strip demonstrating four beats of sinus rhythm followed by a ventricular ectopic beat that initiates ventricular fibrillation. The ST segment is elevated owing to acute myocardial infarction.

Emergency Box 10.1. Resuscitation is stopped when there is return of spontaneous circulation and a pulse, or further attempts at resuscitation are deemed futile. Post resuscitation care centres on maintaining arterial oxygen saturation (94–98%), blood glucose values <10 mmol/L and therapeutic hypothermia.

**Prognosis** In many patients resuscitation is unsuccessful, particularly in those who collapse out of hospital and are brought into hospital in an arrested state. In patients who are successfully resuscitated the prognosis is often poor because they have severe underlying heart diseases. The exceptions are those who are successfully resuscitated from a VF arrest in the early stages of myocardial infarction, when the prognosis is much the same as for other patients with an infarct.

## HEART FAILURE

Heart failure is a complex syndrome that can result from any structural or functional cardiac disorder that impairs the ability of the heart to function as a pump and maintain sufficient cardiac output to meet the demands of the body. It is a common condition, with an estimated annual incidence of 10% in patients over 65 years. The long-term outcome is poor and approximately 50% of patients are dead within 5 years.

### Aetiology

Ischaemic heart disease is the commonest cause in the developed world and hypertension is the commonest cause in Africa (Table 10.5). Any factor that increases myocardial work (arrhythmias, anaemia, hyperthyroidism, pregnancy, obesity) may aggravate existing heart failure or initiate failure.

### Pathophysiology

When the heart fails, compensatory mechanisms attempt to maintain cardiac output and peripheral perfusion. However, as heart failure progresses the mechanisms are overwhelmed and become pathophysiological. These mechanisms involve the following:

#### Activation of the sympathetic nervous system

Improves ventricular function by increasing heart rate and myocardial contractility. Constriction of venous capacitance vessels redistributes flow centrally, and the increased venous return to the heart (preload) further augments ventricular function via the Starling mechanism (Fig. 10.14). Sympathetic stimulation, however, also leads to arteriolar constriction, this increasing the afterload which would eventually reduce cardiac output.

#### Renin–angiotensin system

The fall in cardiac output and increased sympathetic tone lead to diminished renal perfusion, activation of the renin–angiotensin system, and hence



## Emergency Box 10.1

### Basic life support (BLS)

- Assess if patient is responsive – gently shake shoulders and ask loudly ‘are you alright?’.
- If there is no response move onto AIRWAY. Call for help and ask for AED.

### AIRWAY

- Turn the victim on his/her back on a firm surface.
- Open the airway using head tilt and chin lift – place your hand on victim’s forehead and tilt the head back and with fingertips underneath the point of the chin, lift the chin to open the airway.

### BREATHING

- Keeping the airway open, look (chest movement), listen (breath sounds) and feel (victims expired air on your cheek) for normal breathing. Assess for no more than 10 seconds.
- If victim is not breathing normally start chest compressions (see below).
- After 30 chest compressions, give 2 rescue breaths: use head tilt and chin lift, pinch the nose closed, take a breath and create a seal with your lips around his mouth, exhale over 1 minute. Watch for the rise and fall of the patient’s chest, indicating adequate ventilation.

### CIRCULATION

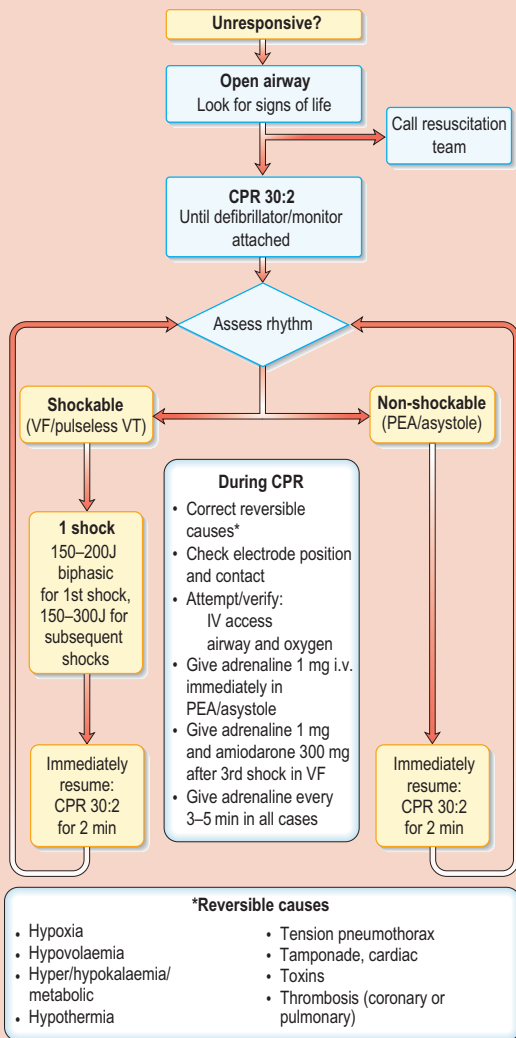
- Circulation is achieved by external chest compression.
- Place the heel of one hand in the centre of the victim’s chest. Place the heel of your other hand on top of the first hand. Interlock the fingers of your hands and with straight arms press down on the sternum 5–6 cm. After each compression release all the pressure on the chest.
- Continue with chest compressions and rescue breaths in a ratio of 30:2 with 100–120 compressions per minute.
- Attach AED pads. AED assesses rhythm and delivers shock if indicated. Immediately resume CPR.

### Advanced life support (ALS)

- Institute as soon as help arrives; continue cardiac massage throughout except during actual defibrillation.
- Give 100% O<sub>2</sub> via Ambu-bag, intubate as soon as possible and initiate positive-pressure ventilation.
- Establish intravenous access and connect ECG leads.
- Drugs administered by the peripheral route should be followed by a flush of 20 mL of 0.9% saline.
- If intravenous access not possible, give drugs by the intraosseous route (tibia and humerus).



## Universal advanced life-support algorithm\*

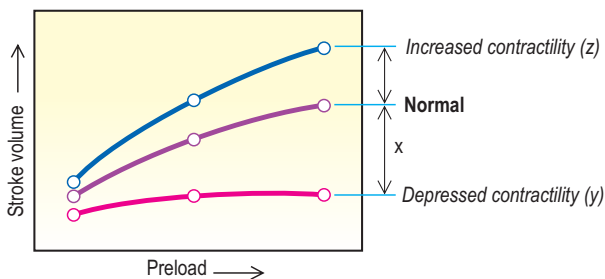


AED, Automated External Defibrillator; CPR, cardiopulmonary resuscitation; EMD, electromechanical dissociation; VF/VT, ventricular fibrillation/ventricular tachycardia

\*Reproduced by permission of the European Resuscitation Council and Laerdal Medical Ltd

**Table 10.5** Causes of heart failure

| Main causes  |
|--|
| Ischaemic heart disease  |
| Cardiomyopathy (dilated)   |
| Hypertension   |
| Other causes   |
| Cardiomyopathy (hypertrophic, restrictive)   |
| Valvular heart disease (mitral, aortic, tricuspid)   |
| Congenital heart disease (atrial septal defect, ventricular septal defect)   |
| Alcohol and chemotherapy, e.g. imatanib, doxorubicin   |
| Hyperdynamic circulation (anaemia, thyrotoxicosis, Paget's disease)  |
| Right heart failure (RV infarct, pulmonary hypertension, pulmonary embolism, cor pulmonale, (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)) |
| Severe bradycardia or tachycardia  |
| Pericardial disease (constrictive pericarditis, pericardial effusion)  |
| Infections (Chagas' disease)   |



**Fig. 10.14** The Starling curve. Starling's law states that the stroke volume is directly proportional to the diastolic filling (i.e. the preload or ventricular end-diastolic pressure). As the preload is increased, the stroke volume rises (normal). Increasing contractility (e.g. increased with sympathetic stimulation) shifts the curve upwards and to the left (z). If the ventricle is overstretched the stroke volume will fall (x). In heart failure (y) the ventricular function curve is relatively flat so that increasing the preload has only a small effect on cardiac output.

increased fluid retention. Salt and water retention further increases venous pressure and maintains stroke volume by the Starling mechanism (Fig. 10.14). As salt and water retention increases, however, peripheral and pulmonary congestion causes oedema and contributes to dyspnoea. Angiotensin II also causes arteriolar constriction, thus increasing the afterload and the work of the heart.

### Natriuretic peptides

These are released from the atria (atrial natriuretic peptide, ANP), ventricles (brain natriuretic peptide, BNP – so called because it was first discovered in the brain) and vascular endothelium (C-type peptide). They have diuretic, natriuretic and hypotensive properties. The effect of their action may represent a beneficial, albeit inadequate, compensatory response leading to reduced cardiac load (preload and afterload).

### Ventricular dilatation

Myocardial failure leads to a reduction of the volume of blood ejected with each heartbeat, and thus an increase in the volume of blood remaining after systole. The increased diastolic volume stretches the myocardial fibres and, as Starling's law would suggest, myocardial contraction is restored. Once heart failure is established, however, the compensatory effects of cardiac dilatation become limited by the flattened contour of Starling's curve. Eventually the increased venous pressure contributes to the development of pulmonary and peripheral oedema. In addition, as ventricular diameter increases, greater tension is required in the myocardium to expel a given volume of blood, and oxygen requirements increase.

### Ventricular remodelling

This is a process of hypertrophy, loss of myocytes and increased interstitial fibrosis which all contribute to progressive and irreversible pump (contractile) failure. The process is multifactorial and includes apoptosis of myocytes and changes in cardiac contractile gene expression (e.g. myosin).

### Clinical features

Most patients with heart failure present insidiously.

The clinical syndromes are:

- *Left ventricular systolic dysfunction (LVSD)* – commonly caused by ischaemic heart disease, but can also occur with valvular heart disease and hypertension.
- *Right ventricular systolic dysfunction (RVSD)* – occurs secondary to LVSD, with primary and secondary pulmonary hypertension, right ventricular infarction and adult congenital heart disease.

- *Diastolic heart failure* (or heart failure with normal ejection fraction) –a syndrome consisting of symptoms and signs of heart failure but with a normal or near normal left ventricular ejection fraction (above 45–50%) and evidence of diastolic dysfunction on echocardiography (e.g. abnormal left ventricular relaxation and filling, usually with left ventricular hypertrophy). Diastolic dysfunction leads to impairment of diastolic ventricular filling and hence decreased cardiac output.

## Symptoms

These include exertional dyspnoea, orthopnoea, paroxysmal nocturnal dyspnoea and fatigue.

## Signs

There is one or more of the following: cardiomegaly with a displaced apex beat, third and fourth heart sounds, elevated JVP, tachycardia, hypotension, bi-basal lung crackles, pleural effusion, ankle oedema (plus sacral oedema in bed-bound patients), ascites and tender hepatomegaly.

The New York Heart Association classification of heart failure (Table 10.6) is useful in the assessment of severity and the response to therapy.

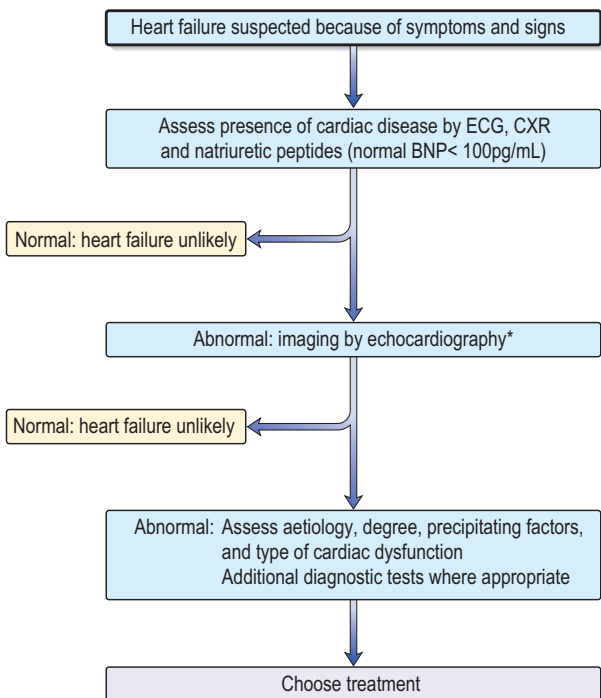
## Investigations

The aim of investigation in a patient with symptoms and signs of heart failure is to objectively show evidence of cardiac dysfunction (usually by echocardiography) and to establish the cause (Fig. 10.15):

- *Chest X-ray* shows cardiac enlargement and features of left ventricular failure (p. 410), but can be normal.
- *ECG* may show evidence of underlying causes, e.g. arrhythmias, ischaemia, left ventricular hypertrophy in hypertension.

**Table 10.6** New York Heart Association (NYHA) Classification of heart failure

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Class 1   | No limitation. Normal physical exercise does not cause fatigue, dyspnoea or palpitations                           |
| Class II  | Mild limitation. Comfortable at rest but normal physical activity produces fatigue, dyspnoea or palpitations       |
| Class III | Marked limitation. Comfortable at rest but less gentle physical activity produces marked symptoms of heart failure |
| Class IV  | Symptoms of heart failure occur at rest and are exacerbated by any physical activity                               |



**Fig. 10.15** Algorithm for the diagnosis of heart failure. Based on the European Society of Cardiology and NICE guidelines. \*Prior to BNP testing in patients with previous MI.

- Blood tests.** Full blood count (to look for anaemia which may exacerbate heart failure), liver biochemistry (may be altered due to hepatic congestion), blood glucose (for diabetes), urea and electrolytes (as a baseline before starting diuretics and ACE inhibitors), and thyroid function tests (in the elderly and those with atrial fibrillation). Brain natriuretic peptide (BNP) is a natriuretic hormone released from the ventricles into the circulation; normal plasma concentrations ( $< 100$  mg/mL) exclude heart failure. The N terminal fragment (NTproBNP) released from pro-BNP can also be measured.
- Echocardiography** is performed in all patients with new onset heart failure. It allows an assessment of ventricular systolic and diastolic function, shows regional wall motion abnormalities and may reveal the

aetiology of heart failure. An ejection fraction of  $<0.45$  is usually accepted as evidence for systolic dysfunction.

- *Other investigations.* Cardiac catheterization, thallium perfusion imaging, PET scanning, cardiac MRI or dobutamine stress echocardiography (p. 419) may be of benefit in selected patients to identify those with *hibernating myocardium* (a region of impaired myocardial contractility due to persistently impaired coronary blood flow) in whom revascularization will improve left ventricular function and long-term prognosis.

## Treatment of chronic heart failure

Treatment is aimed at relieving symptoms, control of disease leading to cardiac dysfunction, retarding disease progression and improving quality and length of survival (Table 10.7).

### Drug treatment

#### Vasodilator therapy

- *Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors* (ACEI, p. 497), e.g. perindopril, lisinopril and quinapril, inhibit the production of angiotensin II, a potent vasoconstrictor, and increase concentrations of the vasodilator bradykinin. They enhance renal salt and water excretion and increase cardiac output by reducing afterload. They improve symptoms, limit the development of progressive heart failure and prolong survival, and should be given to all patients with heart failure. The major side-effect is first-dose hypotension. ACEI treatment should be introduced gradually with a low initial dose and gradual titration every 2 days to full dose with regular blood pressure monitoring and a check on serum potassium and renal function; creatinine levels normally rise by about 10–15% during ACEI therapy.
- *Angiotensin II type 1 receptor antagonists* (ARA, p. 498) (e.g. losartan, ibersartan, candesartan and valsartan) block binding of angiotensin II to the type 1 receptor (AT1) and are indicated as second-line therapy in patients intolerant of ACEI. Unlike ACEI they do not affect bradykinin metabolism and do not produce a cough. Both ACEI and ARA are contraindicated in patients with bilateral renal artery stenosis.
- *Vasodilators.* Isosorbide mononitrate (vasodilator reduces preload) in combination with hydralazine (arteriolar vasodilator reduces afterload) improves symptoms and survival and is used in patients intolerant of ACEI and ARA.

**$\beta$ -blockers** Bisoprolol, carvedilol and nebivolol (p. 495) improve symptoms and reduce cardiovascular mortality in patients with chronic stable heart failure. This effect is thought to arise through blockade of the chronically activated sympathetic system. They are started at a low dose and gradually titrated upwards.

**Table 10.7** Summary of the management of chronic heart failure**General measures\***

Education of patients and family

Physical activity: reduce during exacerbations to reduce work of the heart. Encourage low-level (e.g. 20- to 30-min walks 3–5 times weekly) with compensated heart failure

Diet and social: weight reduction if necessary, no added salt diet, avoid alcohol (negative inotropic effects), stop smoking (p. 512)

Vaccinate against pneumococcal disease and influenza

Correct aggravating factors, e.g. arrhythmias, anaemia, hypertension and pulmonary infections

Driving: unrestricted, except symptomatic heart failure disqualifies driving large lorries and buses

Sexual activity: tell patients on nitrates not to take phosphodiesterase type 5 inhibitors

**Pharmacological treatment**

ACE inhibitor (or angiotensin II receptor antagonist, ARA)\*

 $\beta$ -Blocker\*

Diuretic

Spironolactone/eplerenone

Digoxin

Vasodilators

Inotropic agents

**Non-pharmacological treatment (in selected cases)**

Revascularization (coronary artery bypass graft)

Cardiac resynchronization therapy (biventricular pacing)

Implantable cardioverter defibrillator

Replacement of diseased valves

Repair of congenital heart disease

Cardiac transplantation

Left ventricular assist device and artificial heart (bridge to transplantation)

*\*In all patients. ACEI (ARA) and  $\beta$ -blockers improve prognosis*

**Diuretics** (Table 8.4 and p. 348) are used in patients with fluid overload. They act by promoting renal sodium excretion, with enhanced water excretion as a secondary effect. The resulting loss of fluid reduces ventricular filling pressures (preload) and thus decreases pulmonary and systemic congestion

- *Loop diuretics*, e.g. furosemide (20–40 mg daily, maximum 250–500 mg daily) and bumetanide, are potent diuretics used in moderate/severe heart failure. When given intravenously, they also induce venodilatation, a beneficial action independent of their diuretic effect.
- *Thiazide diuretics*, e.g. bendroflumethiazide (2.5 mg daily, max 10 mg daily), are mild diuretics that inhibit sodium reabsorption in the distal renal tubule. The exception is metolazone (2.5 mg daily, max 10 mg daily), which causes a profound diuresis and is only used in severe and resistant heart failure.
- *Aldosterone antagonists*. Spironolactone and eplerenone are relatively weak diuretics with a potassium-sparing action. Spironolactone (25 mg daily) in combination with conventional treatment improves survival in patients with moderate/severe heart failure and should be given to all these patients. However, gynaecomastia or breast pain is a common side-effect. Eplerenone reduces mortality in patients with acute myocardial infarction and heart failure.

**Digoxin** is indicated in patients with heart failure and atrial fibrillation. It is also used as add-on therapy in patients in sinus rhythm who remain symptomatic despite standard treatment (vasodilators,  $\beta$ -blockers, diuretics).

**Inotropes** (p. 579) are occasionally used in patients not responding to oral medication.

## Non-pharmacological treatment

**Revascularization** Coronary artery disease is the most common cause of heart failure. Revascularization with angioplasty and stenting or surgery can result in improvement in regional abnormalities in wall motion in up to one-third of patients and may thus have a role to play in some individuals.

**Cardiac resynchronization therapy** (also known as biventricular pacing) aims to improve the coordination of the atria and both ventricles. It is indicated for patients with left ventricular systolic dysfunction who have moderate or severe symptoms of heart failure and a widened QRS on ECG.

**Implantable cardioverter–defibrillator (ICD)** is indicated for patients with left ventricular ejection fraction <30% on optimal medical therapy. Sudden death from ventricular tachyarrhythmias is reduced.

**Cardiac transplantation** is the treatment of choice for younger patients with severe intractable heart failure. The expected 1-year survival following transplantation is over 90%, with 75% alive at 5 years. Death is usually the result of operative mortality, organ rejection and overwhelming infection secondary to immunosuppressive treatment. After this time the greatest threat to health is accelerated coronary atherosclerosis, the cause of which is unknown.



## Prognosis

There is usually a gradual deterioration necessitating increased doses of diuretics, and sometimes admission to hospital. The prognosis is poor in those with severe heart failure (i.e. breathless at rest or on minimal exertion), with a 1-year survival rate of 50%.

## Acute heart failure

Acute heart failure is a medical emergency, with left or right heart failure developing over minutes or hours. Aetiology is similar to chronic heart failure and initial investigations are similar (ECG, chest X-ray, blood tests, transthoracic echocardiogram) with additional blood tests of serum troponin (for myocardial necrosis) and D-dimer (for evidence of pulmonary embolism).

## Clinical features

Several clinical syndromes are defined:

- Acute decompensation of chronic heart failure
- Hypertensive heart failure – high blood pressure, preserved left ventricular function, pulmonary oedema on chest X-ray
- Acute pulmonary oedema – acutely breathless, tachycardia, profuse sweating (sympathetic overactivity), wheezes and crackles throughout the chest, hypoxia, pulmonary oedema on chest X-ray
- Cardiogenic shock – hypotension, tachycardia, oliguria, cold extremities
- High output cardiac failure – e.g. septic shock. Warm peripheries, pulmonary congestion, blood pressure may be low
- Right heart failure – low cardiac output, elevated jugular venous pressure, hepatomegaly, hypotension.

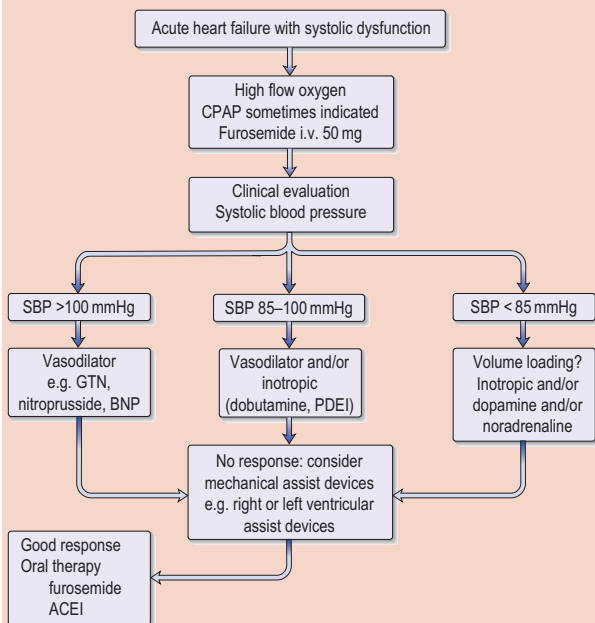
## Management

In many cases the patient is so unwell that treatment (Emergency Box 10.2) must begin before the investigations are completed. Patients are managed in a high dependency unit. All require prophylactic anticoagulation, e.g. enoxaparin (p. 245). Some patients will require central venous cannulation, arterial lines and pulmonary artery cannulation for monitoring and to direct therapy. Initial therapy includes oxygen, diuretics (furosemide 50 mg i.v.) and vasodilator therapy (glyceryl trinitrate intravenous infusion 50 mg in 50 mL 0.9% saline at 2–10 mL/h) providing systolic blood pressure is >85 mm Hg. Inotropic support can be added in patients who do not respond to initial therapy (p. 579).



## Emergency Box 10.2

### Management of acute heart failure with systolic dysfunction



ACEI, angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor; BNP, brain natriuretic peptide; CPAP, continuous positive airway pressure (p. 584); PDEI, phosphodiesterase inhibitor, SBP, systolic blood pressure.

## ISCHAEMIC HEART DISEASE

Myocardial ischaemia results from an imbalance between the supply of oxygen to cardiac muscle and myocardial demand. The most common cause is coronary artery atheroma (coronary artery disease), which results in a fixed obstruction to coronary blood flow. Less common causes of myocardial ischaemia are coronary artery thrombosis, spasm or, rarely, arteritis (e.g. polyarteritis). Increased demand for oxygen due to an increase in cardiac

output occurs in thyrotoxicosis or myocardial hypertrophy (e.g. from aortic stenosis or hypertension).

Coronary artery disease (CAD) is the single largest cause of death in many parts of the world, including the UK. However, in the last decade the mortality rate in the UK has fallen. Atheroma consists of atherosclerotic plaques (an accumulation of lipid, macrophages and smooth muscle cells in the intima of arteries) which narrow the lumen of the artery. The risk factors, listed below, contribute to the development of atheroma through vascular endothelial dysfunction, biochemical abnormalities, immunological factors and inflammation. Some of these risk factors cannot be changed, i.e. they are irreversible, and others can be modified.

### Irreversible risk factors for coronary artery disease

**Age** CAD rate increases with age. It rarely presents in the young, except in familial hyperlipidaemia (p. 692).

**Gender** Men are more often affected than premenopausal women, although the incidence in women after the menopause is similar to that in men, possible due to the loss of the protective effect of oestrogen.

**Family history** CAD is often present in several members of the same family. It is unclear, however, whether family history is an independent risk factor as so many other factors are familial. A positive family history refers to those in whom a first-degree relative has developed ischaemic heart disease before the age of 50 years.

### Potentially changeable risk factors

**Hyperlipidaemia** The risk of CAD is directly related to serum cholesterol levels, but there is an inverse relationship with high-density lipoproteins (HDLs). High triglyceride levels are also independently linked with coronary atheroma. Lowering serum cholesterol slows the progression of coronary atherosclerosis and causes regression of the disease.

**Cigarette smoking** increases the risk of CAD, more so in men. The risk from smoking declines to almost normal after 10 years of abstinence.

**Hypertension** (systolic and diastolic) is linked to an increased incidence of CAD.

**Metabolic factors** Diabetes mellitus, an abnormal glucose tolerance, raised fasting glucose, lack of exercise, and obesity have all been linked to an increased incidence of atheroma.

**Diets** high in fats (particularly saturated fat intake) and low in antioxidant intake (fruit and vegetables) are associated with CAD.

**Other risk factors** Lack of exercise, psychosocial factors (work stress, lack of social support, depression), elevated serum C-reactive protein levels (as an inflammatory marker), high alcohol intake and coagulation factors (high levels of fibrinogen, factor VII and homocysteine) are also associated with CAD, while moderate alcohol consumption (1–2 drinks per day) is associated with a reduced risk of CAD.

## Estimation of cardiovascular risk

Patients with symptomatic cardiovascular disease (coronary artery disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease) have declared themselves to be at high risk for future vascular events. They require intense lifestyle and drug therapy to modify the changeable risk factors towards a more favourable profile, i.e. secondary prevention. The cardiovascular disease risk for asymptomatic apparently healthy people can also be estimated using prediction charts which take into account a number of risk factors, e.g. diabetes mellitus, blood pressure and lipid profile ([http://www.bhsoc.org/Cardiovascular\\_Risk\\_Charts\\_and\\_Calculators.stm](http://www.bhsoc.org/Cardiovascular_Risk_Charts_and_Calculators.stm)). Those individuals whose 10-year cardiovascular risk exceeds 20% should also be targeted for preventative measures, i.e. primary prevention.

## Angina

Angina pectoris is a descriptive term for chest pain arising from the heart as a result of myocardial ischaemia.

## Clinical features

Angina is usually described as central, crushing, retrosternal chest pain, coming on with exertion and relieved by rest within a few minutes. It is often exacerbated by cold weather, anger and excitement, and it frequently radiates to the arms and neck. Variants of classic angina include:

- *Decubitus angina* – occurs on lying down
- *Nocturnal angina* – occurs at night and may waken the patient from sleep
- *Variant (Prinzmetal's)* – angina is caused by coronary artery spasm and results in angina that occurs without provocation, usually at rest
- *Unstable angina* – increases rapidly in severity, occurs at rest, or is of recent onset (less than 1 month) (see Acute coronary syndromes)
- *Cardiac syndrome X* – patients with symptoms of angina, a positive exercise test and normal coronary arteries on angiogram. It is thought to result from functional abnormalities of the coronary microcirculation. The prognostic and therapeutic implications are not known.

Physical examination in patients with angina is often normal, but must include a search for risk factors (e.g. hypertension and xanthelasma occurring in hyperlipidaemia) and underlying causes (e.g. aortic stenosis).

## Diagnosis

The diagnosis of angina is largely based on the clinical history. Occasionally chest wall pain or oesophageal reflux causes diagnostic confusion (p. 408).

## Investigations

- Resting ECG may show ST segment depression and T-wave flattening or inversion during an attack. The ECG is usually normal between attacks.
- Exercise ECG testing is positive (p. 415) in most people with CAD, but a normal test does not exclude the diagnosis. ST segment depression (>1 mm) at a low workload (within 6 minutes of starting the Bruce protocol) or a paradoxical fall in blood pressure with exercise usually indicates severe CAD and is an indication for coronary angiography.
- Other testing protocols (pharmacological stress testing with myocardial perfusion imaging or stress echocardiography p. 419) are used in patients who cannot exercise or have baseline ECG abnormalities that can interfere with interpretation of the exercise ECG test. They may also be helpful in patients with an equivocal exercise test.
- Coronary angiography (p. 420) is occasionally used in patients with chest pain where the diagnosis of angina is uncertain. More commonly it is used to delineate the exact coronary anatomy before coronary intervention (p. 448) or surgery is considered. CT coronary angiography and cardiovascular MR are also being increasingly used to provide information about coronary anatomy.

## Management

This is two-fold:

- Identify and treat risk factors for CAD and offer secondary prevention
- Symptomatic treatment of angina.

**Secondary prevention** Patients with angina are at a high risk of experiencing subsequent cardiovascular events, including myocardial infarction, sudden death and stroke. Modification of risk factors has a beneficial effect on subsequent morbidity and mortality, and includes smoking cessation, control of hypertension, maintaining ideal bodyweight, regular exercise and glycaemic control in diabetes mellitus. In addition, aspirin and statins reduce subsequent risk:

- Aspirin (75 mg daily, p. 242) inhibits platelet cyclo-oxygenase and formation of the aggregating agent thromboxane  $A_2$ , and reduces the risk of coronary events in patients with CAD. Clopidogrel (75 mg daily, p. 242) is an alternative when aspirin is not tolerated, or is contraindicated.
- Lipid-lowering agents reduce mortality and incidence of myocardial infarction in patients with CAD and should be used in patients to achieve a cholesterol level of less than 5.0 mmol/L. Guidelines on introduction of lipid lowering therapy are illustrated on page 695. A statin (p. 700) is used unless the triglycerides are above 3.5 mmol/L, in which case a fibrate is indicated.

**Symptomatic treatment** Acute attacks are treated with sublingual glyceryl trinitrate tablet or spray (p. 499). Patients should be encouraged to use this before exertion, rather than waiting for the pain to develop. The main side-effect is a severe bursting headache, which is relieved by inactivating the tablet either by swallowing or spitting it out.

Most patients will require regular prophylactic therapy. Nitrates,  $\beta$ -blockers or calcium antagonists are most commonly used (p. 501), with treatment being tailored to the individual patient. Some patients will require combination therapy and revascularization for those not controlled on medical therapy:

- *$\beta$ -Adrenergic blocking drugs* (p. 495), e.g. atenolol and metoprolol reduce heart rate and the force of ventricular contraction, both of which reduce myocardial oxygen demand.
- *Calcium antagonists*, (p. 501) e.g. diltiazem, amlodipine, block calcium influx into the cell and the utilization of calcium within the cell. They relax the coronary arteries and reduce the force of left ventricular contraction, thereby reducing oxygen demand. The side-effects (postural dizziness, headache, ankle oedema) are the result of systemic vasodilatation. High-dose nifedipine increases mortality and should not be used in this situation.
- *Nitrates* (p. 499) reduce venous and intracardiac diastolic pressure, reduce impedance to the emptying of the left ventricle, and dilate coronary arteries. They are available in a variety of slow-release preparations, including infiltrated skin plasters, buccal pellets and long-acting oral nitrate preparations, e.g. isosorbide mononitrate, isosorbide dinitrate. The major side-effect is headache, which tends to diminish with continued use.
- *Other treatments* are usually reserved for patients where there are contraindications or inadequate response to the above agents. *Nicorandil* combines nitrate-like activity with potassium channel blockade; it has both arterial and venous vasodilating properties. *Ranolazine* interacts with sodium channels and can improve exercise tolerance but causes QT prolongation. *Ivabradine* inhibits the cardiac pacemaker  $I_f$  current and lowers the heart rate. It is used in patients who have a contraindication or intolerance of  $\beta$ -blockers.

When angina persists or worsens in spite of general measures and optimal medical treatment, patients should be considered for coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) or percutaneous coronary intervention.

**Percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI)** Localized atheromatous lesions are dilated at cardiac catheterization using small inflatable balloons. Stent placement reduces the risk of acute vessel closure and restenosis rates. This technique is widely applied for angina resulting from isolated, proximal, non-calcified atheromatous plaques. Complications include death, acute myocardial infarction, the need for urgent CABG and restenosis. Dual antiplatelet therapy with aspirin and clopidogrel is routinely given (p. 242). The addition of the antiplatelet glycoprotein IIb/IIIa antagonists (tirofiban,

eptifibade, abciximab) has further reduced peri-procedural complications. Drug-eluting stents which release antiproliferative agents (sirolimus, paclitaxel) reduce restenosis rates still further but there is a risk of late stent thrombosis.

**Coronary artery bypass grafting** The left or right internal mammary artery is used to bypass stenoses in the left anterior descending or right coronary artery respectively. Less commonly, the saphenous vein from the leg is anastomosed between the proximal aorta and coronary artery distal to the obstruction. Surgery successfully relieves angina in about 90% of cases and, when performed for left main stem obstruction or three-vessel disease, an improved lifespan and quality of life can be expected. Operative mortality rate is less than 1%. In most patients the angina eventually recurs because of accelerated atherosclerosis in the graft (particularly vein grafts), which can be treated by stenting.

## Acute coronary syndromes

Acute coronary syndromes (ACS) encompass a spectrum of unstable coronary artery disease. The common mechanism to all ACS is rupture or erosion of the fibrous cap of a coronary artery atheromatous plaque with subsequent formation of a platelet-rich clot and vasoconstriction produced by platelet release of serotonin and thromboxane  $A_2$ . Patients with ACS include those whose clinical presentations cover the following diagnoses:

- Unstable angina
- Non-ST-elevation myocardial infarction (NSTEMI)
- ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI).

Unstable angina differs from NSTEMI in that in the latter the occluding thrombus is sufficient to cause myocardial damage and an elevation in serum markers of myocardial injury (troponin and creatine kinase). In patients presenting with symptoms suggestive of ACS, serum troponin should be measured on arrival at hospital and at 12 hours after the onset of symptoms; a normal serum troponin at 12 hours suggests unstable angina rather than myocardial infarction. In both unstable angina and NSTEMI the ECG may be normal or show evidence of ischaemia with T wave inversion and/or ST segment depression. Both unstable angina and NSTEMI may be complicated by myocardial infarction with ST segment elevation (STEMI) if treatment is inadequate. In STEMI there is complete occlusion of the coronary artery by thrombus with usually more severe symptoms, typical ECG changes of myocardial infarction (see below) and elevated troponin and creatine kinase.

## Clinical features

The diagnosis of ACS is made in a patient with known angina and worsening pain on minimal exertion, chest pain at rest, or chest pain unrelieved in the usual time by nitrates or rest. In some patients, chest pain is absent and

presentation is with collapse, arrhythmia or new onset heart failure. Patients without previous angina may also present for the first time with ACS. Other causes of chest pain must be considered in all patients, e.g. aortic dissection, musculoskeletal pain, gastro-oesophageal reflux disease.

## Treatment

Emergency Box 10.3 summarizes the initial investigation and management of patients presenting with suspected ACS.

- *Antiplatelet therapy.* In the absence of contraindications, aspirin (300 mg initially, then 75 mg daily, p. 242) is indicated in all patients. It reduces the risk of subsequent vascular events and deaths and is continued indefinitely. Clopidogrel (300 mg initially, then 75 mg daily, p. 242) is also given and continued for 12 months. Platelet glycoprotein IIb/IIIa receptor inhibitors are added for high-risk patients (see below).
- *Antithrombins.* Heparin interferes with thrombus formation at the site of plaque rupture and reduces the risk of ischaemic events and death. Low molecular weight heparin, e.g. enoxaparin 1 mg/kg s.c. twice daily (p. 244), has better efficacy than unfractionated heparin. Treatment should be for at least 48 hours. The synthetic pentasaccharide, fondaparinux, inhibits factor Xa of the coagulation cascade. It has a lower risk of bleeding than heparin and may become the antithrombin of choice in ACS.
- *Anti-ischaemia agents.* Nitrates (p. 499) are given sublingually or by intravenous infusion with continuing pain for 24–48 hours.  $\beta$ -blockers (p. 495), e.g. metoprolol are the first line oral anti-anginal of choice given their secondary preventative effects in CAD.
- *Plaque stabilization.* Statins (p. 700) and an ACE inhibitor (p. 497) are continued long term and reduce future cardiovascular events.

Oral medication is continued indefinitely after hospital discharge, with the exception of clopidogrel, which is stopped after 12 months.

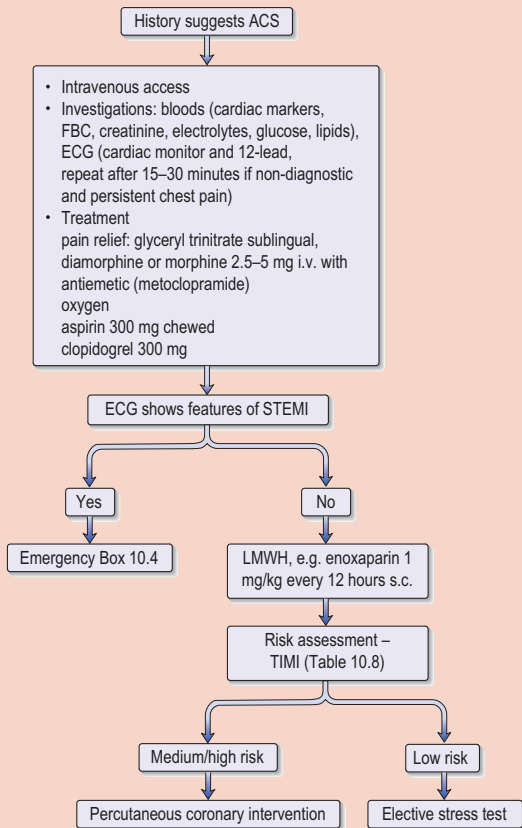
## Risk stratification

There are several risk stratification scoring systems (e.g. Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction (TIMI) and the Global Registry of Acute Coronary Events (GRACE)) that can predict subsequent risk of STEMI and death in patients with unstable angina/NSTEMI and provide a basis for therapeutic decision-making. The TIMI score is shown in Table 10.8. Early coronary angiography with a view to surgery or PCI is recommended in patients at intermediate/high risk. Coronary stenting may stabilize the disrupted coronary plaque and reduces angiographic restenosis rates compared to angioplasty alone. Low-risk patients should have a cardiac stress test (p. 447), usually an exercise ECG, if they remain pain-free with no evidence of ischaemia, heart failure or arrhythmias.



## Emergency Box 10.3

### Immediate management of acute coronary syndrome (ACS)



STEMI, ST segment elevation myocardial infarction; LMWH, low molecular weight heparin.

**Table 10.8** The TIMI risk score in acute coronary syndrome

| Risk factor   | Score |
|---|-------|
| Age > 65 years  | 1     |
| More than three coronary artery disease risk factors – hypertension, hyperlipidaemia, family history, diabetes, smoking | 1     |
| Known CAD (stenosis of $\geq 50\%$ on angiography)  | 1     |
| Aspirin use in the last 7 days  | 1     |
| At least two episodes of rest pain in the last 24 hours   | 1     |
| ST deviation on admission ECG (horizontal ST depression or transient ST elevation > 1 mm)                               | 1     |
| Elevated cardiac markers (creatine kinase-myocardial bound or troponin)   | 1     |

*CAD, coronary artery disease. Low risk = score 0–2; Intermediate risk = score 3–4; High risk = score 5–7*

## ST segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI)

Myocardial infarction is the most common cause of death in developed countries. It is almost always the result of rupture of an atherosclerotic plaque, with the development of thrombosis and total occlusion of the artery.

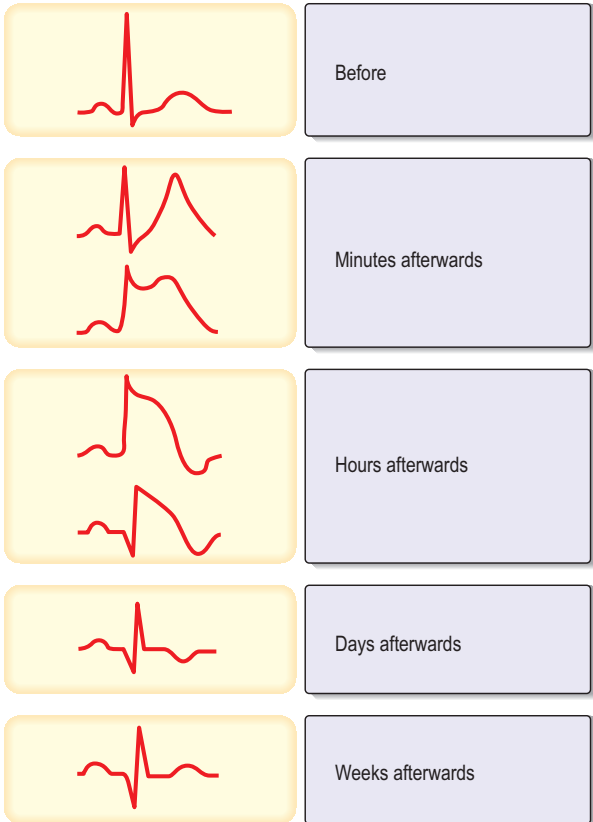
### Clinical features

Central chest pain similar to that occurring in angina is the most common presenting symptom. Unlike angina it usually occurs at rest, is more severe and lasts for some hours. The pain is often associated with sweating, breathlessness, nausea, vomiting and restlessness. There may be no physical signs unless complications develop (see later), although the patient often appears pale, sweaty and grey. About 20% of patients have no pain, and such 'silent' infarctions either go unnoticed or present with hypotension, arrhythmias or pulmonary oedema. This occurs most commonly in elderly patients or those with diabetes or hypertension.

### Investigations

The diagnosis is made on the basis of the clinical history and early ECG appearances. Serial changes (over 3 days) in the ECG and serum levels of cardiac markers confirm the diagnosis and allow an assessment of infarct size (on the magnitude of the enzyme and protein rise, and extent of ECG changes). A normal ECG in the early stages does not exclude the diagnosis.

**The ECG** shows a characteristic pattern. Within hours there is ST segment elevation ( $>1$  mm in two or more contiguous leads) followed by T-wave flattening or inversion (Fig. 10.16). Pathological Q waves are broad ( $>1$  mm) and deep ( $>2$  mm, or  $>25\%$  of the amplitude of the following R wave) negative deflections that start the QRS complex. They develop because the infarcted muscle is electrically silent so that the recording leads 'look



**Fig. 10.16** Electrocardiographic evolution of myocardial infarction. After the first few minutes the T waves become tall, pointed and upright and there is ST segment elevation. After the first few hours the T waves invert, the R wave voltage is decreased and Q waves develop. After a few days the ST segment returns to normal. After weeks or months the T wave may return to upright but the Q wave remains.

through' the infarcted area. This means that the electrical activity being recorded (on the opposite ventricular wall) is moving away from the electrode and is therefore negative. New left bundle branch block is also an indicator of acute myocardial infarction.

Typically ECG changes are confined to the leads that 'face' the infarct. Leads II, III and AVF are involved in inferior infarcts; I, II and AVL in lateral infarcts; and  $V_2$ – $V_6$  in anterior infarcts. As there are no posterior leads, a posterior wall infarct is diagnosed by the appearance of reciprocal changes in  $V_1$  and  $V_2$  (i.e. the development of tall initial R waves, ST segment depression and tall upright T waves). New or presumed new left bundle branch block is also compatible with a diagnosis of myocardial infarction.

**Cardiac markers** Necrotic cardiac muscle releases several enzymes and proteins into the systemic circulation:

- Troponin T and troponin I are regulatory proteins, highly specific and sensitive for cardiac muscle damage. They are released early (within hours of event onset) and persist for several days, and are more sensitive and cardiac specific than CK-MB (see below).
- Creatine kinase (CK), which is also produced by damaged skeletal muscle and brain, is less sensitive than troponin for myocardial damage. The myocardial-bound (MB) isoenzyme fraction of CK is specific for heart muscle damage and the size of the enzyme rise is broadly proportional to the infarct size.

**Other investigations** These include a chest X-ray, full blood count, serum urea and electrolytes, blood glucose and lipids (lipids taken within the first 12 hours reflect preinfarction levels, but after this time they are altered for up to 6 weeks).

## Management

The aims of treatment are relief of pain, limitation of infarct size and treatment of complications. The immediate and subsequent management is summarized in Emergency Boxes 10.3 and 10.4. Treatment is urgent: prolonged times between symptom onset and treatment to recanalize the artery are associated with impaired ST-segment resolution, larger infarct sizes and higher mortality ('time is muscle')

### Limitation of infarct size

*Immediate primary angioplasty* is the optimal treatment for recanalization of the infarct-related arteries (p. 420). When compared with thrombolysis (see below) PCI reduced mortality, re-infarction, recurrent ischaemia, stroke and the need for coronary artery bypass grafting. However, it is only a therapeutic option when rapid access to a catheterization laboratory is possible, the cardiologist is experienced in interventional cardiology and a full support team is immediately available. PCI is also used as 'rescue' therapy in patients who have received thrombolysis and who seem on clinical grounds not to



## Emergency Box 10.4

### Management of ST elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI)

#### Immediate management

- Immediate investigations and treatment (Emergency Box 10.3)
- Reperfusion therapy for patients presenting within 12 hours of onset > primary angioplasty with GP11b/111a inhibitor, e.g. abciximab, or > thrombolysis, e.g. streptokinase: 1.5 million units in 100 mL 0.9% sodium chloride over 1 h by intravenous infusion pump
- Metoprolol 5 mg slow i.v. injection if heart rate > 100 b.p.m. Repeat every 15 minutes, titrated against heart rate and BP. Do not give if hypotension, heart failure, bradycardia, asthma
- Insulin infusion if blood glucose > 11 mmol/L, aim for blood glucose of 7–10 mmol/L
- Treat complications (p. 456).

#### Subsequent management of uncomplicated infarction

- Repeat ECG, serum cardiac markers and electrolytes at 24 and 48 hours after admission
- Initiate secondary prevention therapy: aspirin, clopidogrel, statin, metoprolol, ACE inhibitor and modification of CAD risk factors (as for ACS)
- Transfer from CCU to medical ward after 48 h
- Mobilize gradually and discharge from hospital after 5 days
- Submaximal exercise ECG test prior to discharge if primary angioplasty not performed
- Refer to cardiac rehabilitation programme
- No driving for 1 month; special assessment is required for heavy goods or public service licence holder before driving. Usually return to work in 2 months.

have reperfused (ongoing chest pain and <50% resolution of ST elevation 45–60 minutes after start of thrombolysis).

**Fibrinolytic agents** (thrombolysis) enhance the breakdown of occlusive thromboses by the activation of plasminogen to form plasmin. They are indicated where primary PCA is not available and there are no contraindications to thrombolysis (p. 248). Maximum benefit is derived from thrombolytic agents if they are given early ('time is muscle' – minutes count) and in some centres pre-hospital thrombolysis is used. There is little benefit of thrombolysis more than 12 hours after the onset of symptoms. Of the four thrombolytic agents available, reteplase and tenecteplase are preferred in the pre-hospital setting because they can be administered as a bolus intravenous injection.

Streptokinase and alteplase are given by intravenous infusion. Streptokinase is the cheapest thrombolytic agent available but may induce the development of antistreptokinase antibodies and reduce the effectiveness of subsequent treatment. It should not be used beyond 4 days after first administration.

Mortality is increased in diabetic patients with MI, largely owing to the high incidence of heart failure. This is due in part to metabolic changes which occur in the early stages of MI, and is reduced by rigorous control of blood glucose with insulin infusion, and monitoring with 2-hourly BM Stix. This regimen is also indicated in patients not known to be diabetic who have an admission blood glucose of  $>11$  mmol/L.  $\beta$ -Blockers reduce infarct size and the incidence of sudden death. Metoprolol (5–10 mg i.v) should be given, particularly if the heart rate is greater than 100 b.p.m. and there is persistent pain.

**Subsequent management** ACE inhibitors (or angiotensin receptor blocker if intolerant) reduce mortality and prevent the development of heart failure and should be started on the first day after MI. Treatment with ACE inhibitors, aspirin, statin and  $\beta$ -blockers is continued indefinitely (see ACS for doses). Aldosterone antagonist, e.g. eplerenone 25 mg/day (p. 350) is given to patients with clinical evidence of heart failure and reduced ejection fraction on echocardiogram. Gradual mobilization takes place on the second day and if the patient is fully ambulant and pain-free, a submaximal exercise tolerance test is performed (70% of age-predicted maximal heart rate) before hospital discharge on day 5 or 6 in uncomplicated cases. Patients with test results suggesting ischaemia are referred for coronary angiography.

## Complications (Table 10.9)

### Disturbances of rate, rhythm and conduction (p. 420)

- *Atrial arrhythmias.* Sinus tachycardia is common; treatment is that of the underlying cause, particularly pain, anxiety and heart failure. Sinus bradycardia is especially associated with acute inferior wall myocardial infarction. Treatment is initially with intravenous atropine (p. 421). Temporary transcutaneous or transvenous pacemaker insertion is used if there are adverse signs (heart failure, hypotension, ventricular arrhythmias). Atrial fibrillation occurs in about 10% of cases and is usually a transient rhythm disturbance. Treatment with digoxin or amiodarone is indicated if the fast rate is exacerbating ischaemia or causing heart failure.
- *Ventricular arrhythmias.* Ventricular ectopic beats are common and may precede the development of ventricular tachycardia (VT) or fibrillation (VF). Antiarrhythmic drug treatment has not been shown to affect progression to these more serious arrhythmias. VT may degenerate into VF (p. 432) or may itself produce shock or heart failure. Treatment of VT is with intravenous lidocaine (p. 492) or amiodarone (p. 491) or direct current cardioversion if there is hypotension. VF may be primary (occurring in the first 24–48 hours) or secondary (occurring late after infarction

**Table 10.9** Complications of myocardial infarction

|  |
|--|
| Heart failure  |
| Rupture of free wall of infarcted ventricle (usually fatal)        |
| Rupture of the interventricular septum (ventricular septal defect) |
| Mitral regurgitation   |
| Arrhythmias  |
| Heart block  |
| Pericarditis   |
| Thromboembolism  |
| Dressler's syndrome*   |
| Ventricular aneurysm*  |
| <i>*May develop weeks or months after MI</i>                       |

and associated with large infarcts and heart failure). Treatment is with immediate DC cardioversion. Recurrences may be prevented with intravenous lidocaine or amiodarone. Late VT/VF is associated with a poor prognosis and a high incidence of sudden death, and is an indication for an implantable cardiac defibrillator.

- *Heart block occurring with inferior infarction* is common and usually resolves spontaneously. Some patients respond to intravenous atropine, but a temporary pacemaker may be necessary if the rhythm is very slow or producing symptoms.
- *Complete heart block occurring with anterior wall infarction* indicates the involvement of both bundle branches by extensive myocardial necrosis, and hence a very poor prognosis. The ventricular rhythm in this case is unreliable and a temporary pacing wire is necessary. Heart block is often permanent and a permanent pacing wire may be necessary.

**Heart failure** in a mild form occurs in up to 40% of patients following myocardial infarction. Extensive infarction may cause acute heart failure (p. 443), which may also occur following rupture of the ventricular septum or mitral valve papillary muscle. Both conditions present with worsening heart failure, a systolic thrill and a loud pansystolic murmur. Mortality is high, and urgent surgical correction is often needed. Hypotension with a raised JVP is usually a complication of right ventricular infarction, which may occur with inferior wall infarcts. Initial treatment is with volume expansion, and pericardial effusion (which produces similar signs) should be ruled out on an echocardiogram.

**Embolism** Patients with severe left ventricular dysfunction, persistent AF or mural thrombus on echocardiography are at risk of embolism from left

ventricular or left atrial clot and should be anticoagulated with warfarin to achieve a target INR of 2–3.

**Pericarditis** is characterized by sharp chest pain and a pericardial rub. Treatment is with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs until spontaneous resolution occurs within 1–2 days. Late pericarditis (2–12 weeks after) with fever and a pericardial effusion (Dressler's syndrome) is rare and corticosteroids may be necessary in some patients.

## Prognosis

Prognosis is variable depending on factors such as age and size of infarct. Fifty per cent of patients die during the acute event, many before reaching hospital. A further 10% die in hospital, and of the survivors a further 10% die in the next 2 years.

## RHEUMATIC FEVER

Rheumatic fever is an inflammatory disease that occurs in children and young adults (the first attack usually occurs between 5 and 15 years of age) as a result of infection with group A streptococci. It is a complication of less than 1% of streptococcal pharyngitis, developing 2–3 weeks after the onset of sore throat. It is thought to develop because of an autoimmune reaction triggered by the streptococci, and is not the result of direct infection of the heart.

## Epidemiology

The incidence in developed countries has decreased dramatically since the 1920s as a result of improved sanitation, a change in the virulence of the organism and the use of antibiotics.

## Clinical features

The disease presents suddenly with fever, joint pains and loss of appetite. The major clinical features are as follows:

- Changing heart murmurs, mitral and aortic regurgitation, heart failure and chest pain, caused by carditis affecting all three layers of the heart
- Polyarthritides – fleeting and affecting the large joints, e.g. knees, ankles and elbows
- Skin manifestations – erythema marginatum (transient pink coalescent rings develop on the trunk) and small non-tender subcutaneous nodules which occur over tendons, joints and bony prominences
- Sydenham's chorea ('St Vitus' dance') indicates involvement of the central nervous system and presents with 'fidgety' and spasmodic, unintentional movements.



## Investigations

**Blood count** shows a leucocytosis and a raised ESR.

The diagnosis is based on the revised Duckett Jones criteria, which depend on the combination of certain clinical features and evidence of recent streptococcal infection.

## Treatment

Treatment is with complete bed rest and high-dose aspirin. Penicillin is given to eradicate residual streptococcal infection, and then long term to all patients with persistent cardiac damage.

### Chronic rheumatic heart disease

More than 50% of those who suffer acute rheumatic fever with carditis will later (after 10–20 years) develop chronic rheumatic valvular disease, predominantly affecting the mitral and aortic valves (see below).

### VALVULAR HEART DISEASE

Cardiac valves may be incompetent (regurgitant), stenotic or both. The most common problems are acquired left-sided valvular lesions: aortic stenosis, mitral stenosis, mitral regurgitation and aortic regurgitation. Abnormal valves produce turbulent blood flow, which is heard as a murmur on auscultation; a few murmurs are also felt as a thrill on palpation. Murmurs may sometimes be heard with normal hearts ('innocent murmurs'), often reflecting a hyperdynamic circulation, e.g. in pregnancy, anaemia and thyrotoxicosis. Benign murmurs are soft, short, systolic, may vary with posture, and are not associated with signs of organic heart disease.

Diagnosis of valve dysfunction is made clinically and by echocardiography. The severity is assessed by Doppler echocardiography, which measures the direction and velocity of blood flow and allows a calculation to be made of the pressure across a stenotic valve. Transoesophageal echocardiography, cardiac magnetic resonance or invasive cardiac catheterization are usually only necessary to assess complex situations, such as coexisting valvular and ischaemic heart disease, or suspected dysfunction of a prosthetic valve. Treatment of valve dysfunction is both medical and surgical; this may be valve replacement, valve repair (some incompetent valves) or valvotomy (the fused cusps of a stenotic valve are separated along the commissures). The timing of surgery is critical and must not be delayed until there is irreversible ventricular dysfunction or pulmonary hypertension.

## Prosthetic heart valves

Prosthetic heart valves are either mechanical or tissue (bioprosthetic). Tissue prostheses are derived from human (homograft), or from porcine or bovine

(xenograft) origin. Tissue valves tend to degenerate after about 10 years but patients do not need long-term anti-coagulation. These valves are often used in elderly patients. Mechanical valves last much longer but are thrombogenic and patients need lifelong anticoagulation. There are several types of mechanical valve: a ball-and-cage design (Starr–Edwards), tilting disc (Björk–Shiley) or a double tilting disc (St Jude). All damaged and prosthetic valves carry a risk of infection.

The individual valve lesions are considered separately below, but disease may affect more than one valve (particularly in rheumatic heart disease and infective endocarditis), when a combination of clinical features is produced.

## Mitral stenosis

### Aetiology

Most cases of mitral stenosis are a result of rheumatic heart disease, with symptoms appearing many years after the episode of acute rheumatic fever. It primarily affects women. However, a reliable history of rheumatic fever is not always obtained.

### Pathophysiology

Thickening and immobility of the valve leaflets leads to obstruction of blood flow from the left atrium to left ventricle. As a result there is an increase in left atrial pressure, pulmonary hypertension and right heart dysfunction. Atrial fibrillation is common due to the elevation of left atrial pressure and dilatation. Thrombus may form in the dilated atrium and give rise to systemic emboli (e.g. to the brain, resulting in a stroke). Chronically elevated left atrial pressure leads to an increase in pulmonary capillary pressure and pulmonary oedema. Pulmonary arterial vasoconstriction leads to pulmonary hypertension and eventually right ventricular hypertrophy, dilatation and failure.

### Symptoms

Exertional dyspnoea which becomes progressively more severe is usually the first symptom. A cough productive of blood-tinged sputum is common, and frank haemoptysis may occasionally occur. The onset of atrial fibrillation may produce an abrupt deterioration and precipitate pulmonary oedema. Pulmonary hypertension eventually leads to right heart failure with fatigue and lower limb oedema.

### Signs

- Mitral facies or malar flush occurs with severe stenosis. This is a cyanotic or dusky-pink discoloration on the upper cheeks.
- The pulse is often irregular as a result of atrial fibrillation.

- The apex beat is 'tapping' in quality as a result of a combination of a palpable first heart sound and left ventricular backward displacement produced by an enlarging right ventricle.
- Auscultation at the apex reveals a loud first heart sound, an opening snap (when the mitral valve opens) in early diastole, followed by a rumbling mid-diastolic murmur. If the patient is in sinus rhythm the murmur becomes louder when atrial systole occurs (presystolic accentuation), as a result of increased flow across the narrowed valve.

The presence of a loud second heart sound, parasternal heave, elevated JVP, ascites and peripheral oedema indicates that pulmonary hypertension producing right ventricular overload has developed.

## Investigations

Investigations are performed to confirm the diagnosis, to estimate the severity of valve stenosis and to look for pulmonary hypertension.

**Chest X-ray** shows an enlarged left atrium, pulmonary venous hypertension and sometimes a calcified mitral valve. Pulmonary oedema is present in severe disease.

**ECG** usually shows atrial fibrillation. In patients in sinus rhythm, left atrial hypertrophy results in a bifid P wave ('P mitrale'). With progressive disease there are features of right ventricular hypertrophy.

**Echocardiography** confirms the diagnosis and assesses severity.

## Management

**General** Treatment is often not required for mild mitral stenosis. Complications are treated medically, e.g.  $\beta$ -blockers/digoxin for atrial fibrillation, diuretics for heart failure and anticoagulation in patients with atrial fibrillation to prevent clot formation and embolization.

**Specific** Mechanical relief of the mitral stenosis is indicated if symptoms are more than mild or if pulmonary hypertension develops. In many cases percutaneous balloon valvotomy (access to the mitral valve is obtained via a catheter passed through the femoral vein, right atrium and interatrial septum, and a balloon inflated across the valve to split the commissures) provides relief of symptoms. In other cases commissurotomy (splitting of the valve leaflets) or mitral valve replacement is necessary. The latter is performed if there is associated mitral regurgitation, a badly calcified valve or thrombus in the left atrium despite anticoagulation.

## Mitral regurgitation

### Aetiology

Prolapsing mitral valve is the most common cause in the developed world but rheumatic heart disease continues to be a common cause in the developing world (Table 10.10).

**Table 10.10** Causes of mitral regurgitation

|   |
|---|
| Rheumatic heart disease   |
| Mitral valve prolapse   |
| Infective endocarditis*   |
| Ruptured chordae tendineae*   |
| Rupture of the papillary muscle* complicating myocardial infarction       |
| Papillary muscle dysfunction  |
| Dilating left ventricle disease causing 'functional' mitral regurgitation |
| Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy   |
| Rarely: systemic lupus erythematosus, Marfan's syndrome                   |
| Ehlers–Danlos syndrome  |
| <i>*These disorders may produce acute regurgitation</i>                   |

## Pathophysiology

The circulatory changes depend on the speed of onset and severity of regurgitation. Long-standing regurgitation produces little increase in the left atrial pressure because flow is accommodated by an enlarged left atrium. With acute mitral regurgitation there is a rise in left atrial pressure, resulting in an increase in pulmonary venous pressure and pulmonary oedema. The left ventricle dilates, but more so with chronic regurgitation.

## Symptoms

Acute regurgitation presents as pulmonary oedema. Chronic regurgitation causes progressive exertional dyspnoea, fatigue and lethargy (resulting from reduced cardiac output). In the later stages the symptoms of right heart failure also occur and eventually lead to congestive cardiac failure. Thromboembolism is less common than with mitral stenosis, although infective endocarditis is much more common.

## Signs

The apex beat is displaced laterally, with a diffuse thrusting character. The first heart sound is soft. There is a pansystolic murmur (palpated as a thrill), loudest at the apex and radiating widely over the precordium and into the axilla. A third heart sound is often present, caused by rapid filling of the dilated left ventricle in early diastole.

## Investigations

- Chest X-ray and ECG changes are not sensitive or specific for the diagnosis of mitral regurgitation. On both, evidence of enlargement of

the left atrium, the left ventricle or both, is seen late in the course of the disease.

- Echocardiography can establish the aetiology and haemodynamic consequences of mitral regurgitation. Doppler and colour flow Doppler is used to measure the severity of mitral regurgitation. Cardiac magnetic resonance or cardiac catheterization is rarely needed for further evaluation.

## Management

Mild mitral regurgitation in the absence of symptoms can be managed conservatively by following the patient with serial echocardiograms every 1–5 years depending on the severity. Patients should be referred for surgery (mitral valve replacement or repair) if more than mild symptoms develop or there is evidence of left ventricular dysfunction (ventricular dilatation or reduced ejection fraction). Emergency valve replacement is necessary with acute severe mitral regurgitation.

### Prolapsing ('floppy') mitral valve

This is a common condition occurring mainly in young women. One or more of the mitral valve leaflets prolapses back into the left atrium during ventricular systole, producing mitral regurgitation in a few cases.

## Aetiology

The cause is unknown, but it is associated with Marfan's syndrome, hyperthyroidism and rheumatic or ischaemic heart disease.

## Clinical features

Most patients are asymptomatic. Atypical chest pain is the most common symptom. Some patients complain of palpitations caused by atrial and ventricular arrhythmias. The typical finding on examination is a mid-systolic click, which may be followed by a murmur. Occasionally there are features of mitral regurgitation.

## Investigation

Echocardiography is diagnostic and shows the prolapsing valve cusps.

## Management

Chest pain and palpitations are treated with  $\beta$ -blockers. Anticoagulation to prevent thromboembolism is indicated if there is significant mitral regurgitation and atrial fibrillation.

## Aortic stenosis

### Aetiology

There are three causes of aortic valve stenosis:

- Degeneration and calcification of a normal valve – presenting in the elderly
- Calcification of a congenital bicuspid valve – presenting in middle age
- Rheumatic heart disease.

### Pathophysiology

Obstruction to left ventricular emptying results in left ventricular hypertrophy. In turn this results in increased myocardial oxygen demand, relative ischaemia of the myocardium and consequent angina, arrhythmias and eventually left ventricular failure.

### Symptoms

There are usually no symptoms until the stenosis is moderately severe (aortic orifice reduced to a third of its normal size). The classic symptoms are angina, exertional syncope and the symptoms of congestive heart failure. Ventricular arrhythmias may cause sudden death.

### Signs

The carotid pulse is slow rising (plateau pulse) and the apex beat thrusting. There is a harsh systolic ejection murmur (palpated as a thrill) at the right upper sternal border and radiating to the neck. The murmur may be preceded by an ejection click, which is the result of sudden opening of a deformed but mobile valve.

### Investigations

- Chest X-ray shows a normal heart size, prominence of the ascending aorta (post-stenotic dilatation) and there may be valvular calcification.
- ECG shows evidence of left ventricular hypertrophy and a left ventricular strain pattern when the disease is severe (depressed ST segment and T wave inversion in the leads orientated to the left ventricle, i.e. I, AVL, V<sub>5</sub> and V<sub>6</sub>).
- Echocardiography is diagnostic in most cases. Doppler examination of the valve allows an assessment of the pressure gradient across the valve during systole.
- Cardiac catheterization and coronary angiography are used particularly in patients with angina to exclude coronary artery disease, which may coexist in this predominantly elderly population.

## Management

The onset of symptoms in a patient with aortic stenosis is an ominous sign: 75% of patients will be dead within 3 years unless the valve is replaced. Thus aortic valve replacement is indicated in symptomatic patients, and some would recommend valve replacement for a critically stenotic valve (valve area  $\leq 0.6 \text{ cm}^2$  or the valve gradient exceeds 50 mmHg on echocardiography) in the absence of symptoms. Balloon aortic valvotomy is sometimes used in childhood or adolescence but aortic valve replacement will usually be needed a few years later.

## Aortic regurgitation

### Aetiology

Aortic regurgitation results from either disease of the valve cusps or dilatation of the aortic root and valve ring. The most common causes are rheumatic fever and infective endocarditis complicating an already damaged valve (Table 10.11).

### Pathophysiology

Chronic regurgitation volume loads the left ventricle and results in hypertrophy and dilatation. The stroke volume is increased, which results in an increased pulse pressure and the myriad of clinical signs described below. Eventually contraction of the ventricle deteriorates, resulting in left ventricular failure. The adaptations to the volume load entering the left ventricle do not

**Table 10.11** Causes and associations of aortic regurgitation

| Acute aortic regurgitation          | Chronic aortic regurgitation    |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Infective endocarditis              | Chronic rheumatic heart disease |
| Acute rheumatic fever               | Syphilis                        |
| Dissection of the aorta             | Arthritides                     |
| Ruptured sinus of Valsalva aneurysm | Reiter's syndrome               |
| Failure of prosthetic heart valve   | Ankylosing spondylitis          |
|                                     | Rheumatoid arthritis            |
|                                     | Severe hypertension             |
|                                     | Bicuspid aortic valve           |
|                                     | Aortic endocarditis             |
|                                     | Marfan's syndrome               |
|                                     | Osteogenesis imperfecta         |

occur with acute regurgitation and patients may present with pulmonary oedema and a reduced stroke volume (hence many of the signs of chronic regurgitation are absent).

## Symptoms

In chronic regurgitation, patients remain asymptomatic for many years before developing dyspnoea, orthopnoea and fatigue as a result of left ventricular failure.

## Signs

- A 'collapsing' (water-hammer) pulse with wide pulse pressure is pathognomonic.
- The apex beat is displaced laterally and is thrusting in quality.
- A blowing early diastolic murmur is heard at the left sternal edge in the fourth intercostal space. It is accentuated when the patient sits forward with the breath held in expiration. Increased stroke volume produces turbulent flow across the aortic valve, heard as a mid-systolic murmur.
- A mid-diastolic murmur (Austin Flint murmur) may be heard over the cardiac apex and is thought to be produced as a result of the aortic jet impinging on the mitral valve, producing premature closure of the valve and physiological stenosis.

## Investigations

- Chest X-ray shows a large heart and dilatation of the ascending aorta.
- ECG shows evidence of left ventricular hypertrophy (see aortic stenosis).
- Echocardiography with Doppler examination of the aortic valve helps estimate the severity of regurgitation.
- Cardiac magnetic resonance or cardiac catheterization is sometimes needed to assess severity.

## Management

Mild symptoms may respond to the reduction of afterload with vasodilators and diuretics. The timing of surgery and aortic valve replacement is critical and must not be delayed until there is irreversible left ventricular dysfunction.

### Tricuspid and pulmonary valve disease

Tricuspid and pulmonary valve disease is uncommon. Tricuspid stenosis is almost always the result of rheumatic fever and is frequently associated with mitral and aortic valve disease, which tends to dominate the clinical picture.



Tricuspid regurgitation is usually functional and secondary to dilatation of the right ventricle (and hence tricuspid valve ring) in severe right ventricular failure. Much less commonly it is caused by rheumatic heart disease, infective endocarditis or carcinoid syndrome (p. 98). On examination there is a pansystolic murmur heard at the lower left sternal edge, the jugular venous pressure is elevated, with giant 'v' waves (produced by the regurgitant jet through the tricuspid valve in systole), and the liver is enlarged and pulsates in systole. There may be severe peripheral oedema and ascites. In functional tricuspid regurgitation these signs improve with diuretic therapy.

Pulmonary regurgitation results from pulmonary hypertension and dilatation of the valve ring. Occasionally it is the result of endocarditis (usually in intravenous drug abusers). Auscultation reveals an early diastolic murmur heard at the upper left sternal edge (Graham–Steell murmur), similar to that of aortic regurgitation. Usually there are no symptoms and treatment is rarely required. Pulmonary stenosis is usually a congenital lesion but may present in adult life with fatigue, syncope and right ventricular failure.

## Infective endocarditis

Infective endocarditis is an infection of the endocardium or vascular endothelium of the heart. It may occur as a fulminating or acute infection, but more commonly runs an insidious course and is known as subacute (bacterial) endocarditis (SBE).

Infection occurs in the following:

- On valves which have a congenital or acquired defect (usually on the left side of the heart). Right-sided endocarditis is more common in intravenous drug addicts.
- On normal valves with virulent organisms such as *Streptococcus pneumoniae* or *Staphylococcus aureus*.
- On prosthetic valves, when infection may be 'early' (within 60 days of valve surgery and acquired in perioperative period) or 'late' (following bacteraemia). Infected prosthetic valves often need to be replaced.
- In association with a ventricular septal defect or persistent ductus arteriosus.

## Aetiology

Not all organisms have the same propensity to cause endocarditis. *Strep. viridans*, *Staph. aureus* and enterococci are common causes (Table 10.12). Blood cultures remain negative in 5–10% of patients with infective endocarditis. The usual cause is prior antibiotic therapy and good history taking is vital. Culture-negative endocarditis is particularly likely with the following organisms which are more difficult to isolate in culture: *Coxiella burnetii* (the cause of Q fever), *Chlamydia* spp., *Bartonella* spp. (organisms that cause trench fever and cat scratch disease) and *Legionella*.

**Table 10.12** Modified Duke criteria for the diagnosis of infective endocarditis**Major criteria****Positive blood cultures for infective endocarditis**

Typical microorganism for infective endocarditis from two separate blood cultures in the absence of a primary focus: *Streptococcus viridans*  
*Streptococcus bovis*

HACEK group – *Haemophilus* species, *Actinobacillus actinomycetemcomitans*,  
*Cardiobacterium hominis*, *Eikenella corrodens*, and *Kingella kingae*

Community-acquired *Staphylococcus aureus* or enterococci

Persistently positive blood cultures, defined as recovery of a microorganism consistent with infective endocarditis from blood cultures drawn more than 12 hours apart or all of three or the majority of four or more separate blood cultures, with first and last drawn at least 1 hour apart

Single positive blood culture for *Coxiella burnetii* or antiphase IgG antibody titre > 1:800

**Evidence for endocardial involvement**

TTE (TEE in prosthetic valve) showing oscillating intracardiac mass on a valve or supporting structures, in the path of regurgitant jet or on implanted material, in the absence of an alternative anatomic explanation, or

Abscess, or

New partial dehiscence of prosthetic valve

**Minor criteria**

Predisposition, e.g. prosthetic valve, intravenous drug use

Fever – 38°C

Vascular phenomena

Immunological phenomena

Microbiological evidence – positive blood culture but not meeting major criteria

TTE, transthoracic echocardiogram; TEE, transoesophageal echocardiogram

## Pathology

A mass of fibrin, platelets and infectious organisms forms vegetations along the edges of the valve. Virulent organisms destroy the valve, producing regurgitation and worsening heart failure.

## Clinical features

Symptoms and signs result from:

- Systemic features of infection, such as malaise, fever, night sweats, weight loss and anaemia. Slight splenomegaly is common. Clubbing is rare and occurs late.
- Valve destruction, leading to heart failure and new or changing heart murmurs (in 90% of cases).
- Vascular phenomena due to embolization of vegetations and metastatic abscess formation in the brain, spleen and kidney. Embolization from right-sided endocarditis causes pulmonary infarction and pneumonia.
- Immune complex deposition in blood vessels producing a vasculitis and petechial haemorrhages in the skin, under the nails (splinter haemorrhages) and in the retinae (Roth's spots). Osler's nodes (tender subcutaneous nodules in the fingers) and Janeway lesions (painless erythematous macules on the palms) are uncommon. Immune complex deposition in the joints causes arthralgia and, in the kidney, acute glomerulonephritis. Microscopic haematuria occurs in 70% of cases but acute kidney injury is uncommon.

Endocarditis should always be excluded in any patient with a heart murmur and fever.

## Investigation

- Blood cultures must be taken before antibiotics are started. Three sets (i.e. six bottles) taken over 24 hours will identify the organism in 75% of cases. Special culture techniques and serological tests are occasionally necessary if blood cultures are negative and unusual organisms suspected.
- Transthoracic echocardiography identifies vegetations and underlying valvular dysfunction. Small vegetations may be missed and a normal echocardiogram does not exclude endocarditis. Transoesophageal echocardiography is more sensitive (but not 100%) particularly in cases of suspected prosthetic valve endocarditis.
- Serological tests may be helpful if unusual organisms are suspected, e.g. *Coxiella*, *Bartonella*, *Legionella*.
- Chest X-ray may show heart failure or evidence of septic emboli in right-sided endocarditis.
- ECG may show myocardial infarction (emboli to the coronary circulation) or conduction defects (due to extension of the infection to the valve annulus and adjacent septum).
- Blood count shows a normochromic, normocytic anaemia with a raised ESR and often a leucocytosis.
- Urine Stix testing shows haematuria in most cases.
- Serum immunoglobulins are increased and complement levels decreased as a result of immune complex formation.

## Diagnostic criteria

The Duke classification for diagnosis of endocarditis relies upon major and minor criteria (Table 10.12). A definite diagnosis of endocarditis requires one of the following:

- Direct evidence of infective endocarditis by histology or culture of organism, e.g. from a vegetation
- Two major criteria
- One major and any three minor criteria
- Five minor criteria.

Possible endocarditis is diagnosed if there is one major and one minor criterion or three minor.

## Management

**Drug therapy** Treatment is with bactericidal antibiotics, given intravenously for the first 2 weeks and by mouth for a further 2–4 weeks. While awaiting the results of blood cultures a combination of intravenous benzylpenicillin and gentamicin is given unless staphylococcal endocarditis is suspected, when vancomycin should be substituted for penicillin. Subsequent treatment depends on the results of blood cultures and the antibiotic sensitivity of the organism. Antibiotic doses are adjusted to ensure adequate bactericidal activity (microbiological assays of minimum bactericidal concentrations). Surgery to replace the valve should be considered when there is severe heart failure, early infection of prosthetic material, worsening renal failure and extensive damage to the valve.

## PULMONARY HEART DISEASE

### Pulmonary hypertension

The lung circulation offers a low resistance to flow compared to the systemic circulation and the normal mean pulmonary artery pressure at rest is 10–14 mmHg (compared to mean systemic arterial pressure of about 90 mmHg). Pulmonary hypertension is characterized by elevated pulmonary artery pressure (> 25 mmHg at rest) and secondary right ventricular failure.

### Aetiology

Pulmonary hypertension occurs due to an increase in pulmonary vascular resistance or an increase in pulmonary blood flow. Specific causes are listed in Table 10.13.

### Clinical features

Exertional dyspnoea, lethargy and fatigue are the initial symptoms due to an inability to increase cardiac output with exercise. As right ventricular

**Table 10.13** Causes of pulmonary hypertension

## Pulmonary arterial hypertension:

Hereditary  
 Idiopathic (no cause identified)  
 Systemic sclerosis, systemic lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis  
 Drugs: long term use of cocaine and amphetamines, dexfenfluramine  
 HIV infection  
 Portal hypertension (portopulmonary hypertension)  
 Congenital heart disease with systemic-to-pulmonary communication  
 (atrial septal defect, ventricular septal defect)  
 Schistosomiasis  
 Chronic haemolytic anaemia  
 Pulmonary veno-occlusive disease

## Pulmonary hypertension secondary to:

Left heart disease: valvular, systolic dysfunction, diastolic dysfunction  
 Lung disease and/or hypoxia, e.g. chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, obstructive sleep apnoea, lung fibrosis  
 Thromboembolic occlusion of proximal or distal pulmonary vasculature  
 Multifactorial mechanisms: myeloproliferative disorders, sarcoidosis, glycogen storage disease

failure develops there is peripheral oedema and abdominal pain from hepatic congestion. On examination there is a loud pulmonary second sound, and a right parasternal heave (caused by right ventricular hypertrophy). In advanced disease there are features of right heart failure (cor pulmonale): elevated jugular venous pressure with a prominent V wave if tricuspid regurgitation is present, hepatomegaly, a pulsatile liver, peripheral oedema, ascites and a pleural effusion. There are also features of the underlying disease.

## Investigations

The aim of investigation is to confirm the presence of pulmonary hypertension and demonstrate the cause:

- Chest X-ray shows enlarged proximal pulmonary arteries which taper distally. It may also reveal the underlying cause (e.g. emphysema, calcified mitral valve).
- ECG shows right ventricular hypertrophy and P pulmonale (p. 411).
- Echocardiography shows right ventricular dilatation and/or hypertrophy and may also reveal the cause of pulmonary hypertension, e.g. intra-cardiac shunt. It is possible to measure the peak pressure with Doppler echocardiography.

## Management

The initial treatment is oxygen, warfarin (due to a higher risk of intrapulmonary thrombosis), diuretics for oedema and oral calcium-channel blockers as pulmonary vasodilators, together with treatment of the underlying cause. In more advanced disease treatment is aimed at decreasing pulmonary vascular resistance and includes oral endothelin receptor antagonists (bosentan, sitaxentam), prostanoid analogues (inhaled iloprost, treprostinil, beraprost), intravenous epoprostenol and oral sildenafil. In primary pulmonary hypertension there is a progressive downhill course and many patients ultimately require heart and lung transplantation.

### Pulmonary embolism (PE)

PE is a common and potentially lethal condition. Unfortunately the diagnosis is often missed because the presenting symptoms are vague or non-specific. Emboli usually arise from thrombi in the iliofemoral veins (deep venous thrombosis, p. 487). The risk factors for thromboembolism are listed on page 238. Rarely PE results from clot formation in the right heart.

## Pathology

A massive embolism obstructs the right ventricular outflow tract and therefore suddenly increases pulmonary vascular resistance, causing acute right heart failure. A small embolus impacts in a terminal, peripheral pulmonary vessel and may be clinically silent unless it causes pulmonary infarction. Lung tissue is ventilated but not perfused, resulting in impaired gas exchange.

## Clinical features

- Small/medium PEs present with breathlessness, pleuritic chest pain, and haemoptysis if there is pulmonary infarction. On examination the patient may be tachypnoeic and have a pleural rub and an exudative (occasionally bloodstained) pleural effusion can develop.
- Massive PE presents as a medical emergency: the patient has severe central chest pain and suddenly becomes shocked, pale and sweaty, with marked tachypnoea and tachycardia. Syncope and death may follow rapidly. On examination the patient is shocked, with central cyanosis. There is elevation of the jugular venous pressure, a right ventricular heave, accentuation of the second heart sound and a gallop rhythm (acute right heart failure).
- Multiple recurrent PEs present with symptoms and signs of pulmonary hypertension (see above), developing over weeks to months.

## Investigations

A clinical pre-test probability score of PE is used prior to investigation (Table 10.14) which helps to decide on the most appropriate first-line diagnostic test and interpretation of the results (Emergency Box 10.5):

- Chest X-ray, ECG and blood gases may all be normal with small/medium emboli and any abnormalities with massive emboli are non-specific. The chest X-ray and ECG are useful to exclude other conditions that may present similarly. The chest X-ray may show decreased vascular markings and a raised hemidiaphragm (caused by loss of lung volume). With pulmonary infarction, a late feature is the development of a wedge-shaped opacity adjacent to the pleural edge, sometimes with a pleural effusion. The commonest ECG finding is sinus tachycardia or there may be new onset atrial fibrillation. The features of acute right heart strain

**Table 10.14** Revised Geneva score for the clinical prediction of a pulmonary embolism

|   | Score              |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Risk factors</b>                                   |                    |
| Age > 65 years  | +1                 |
| Previous deep venous thrombosis or pulmonary embolism | +3                 |
| Surgery or fracture within 1 month                    | +2                 |
| Active malignancy                                     | +2                 |
| <b>Symptoms</b>                                       |                    |
| Unilateral leg pain                                   | +3                 |
| Haemoptysis   | +2                 |
| <b>Clinical signs</b>                                 |                    |
| Heart rate (b.p.m.)                                   |                    |
| 75–94   | +3                 |
| ≥95   | +5                 |
| Pain on leg deep vein palpation and unilateral oedema | +4                 |
| <b>Clinical probability</b>                           | <b>Total score</b> |
| Low   | 0–3                |
| Intermediate  | 4–10               |
| High  | ≥11                |

*NB: diagnosis of pulmonary embolism is not excluded on this basis alone; about 8% of patients with a low clinical score will have a PE.*

*(After Righini M, Le Gal G, Aujesky D, et al. (2008) Lancet 371: 1343–1352, with permission from Elsevier.)*

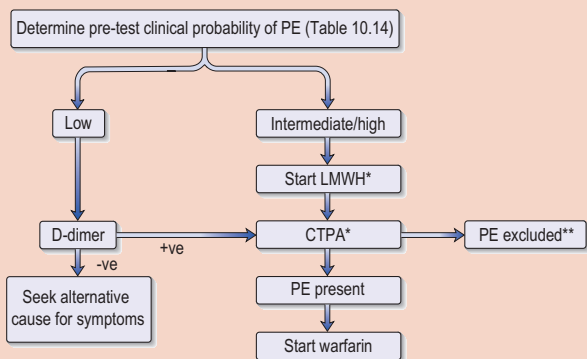


## Emergency Box 10.5

### Management of suspected and confirmed pulmonary embolism (PE)

#### INVESTIGATION AND DIAGNOSIS

Investigation and diagnosis



- High flow oxygen if hypoxaemic
- Thrombolysis (p. 247) for massive embolism with persistent hypotension
- Analgesia: morphine 5–10 mg i.v. relieves pain and anxiety
- Prevention of further thrombi: LMWH and oral warfarin (p. 246).
- Intravenous fluids (to raise the filling pressure) for patients presenting with moderate/severe embolism.

CTPA, CT pulmonary angiogram; LMWH, low-molecular-weight heparin.

\*patients with massive PE and persistent hypotension should be treated with thrombolysis. In these cases, bedside echocardiography is an alternative diagnostic test to CTPA if CT is not immediately available or the patient is too unstable for transfer to the radiology department.

\*\*rarely, CTPA is inconclusive and high pre-test clinical probability patients may need further imaging, e.g. repeat CTPA (if poor quality initially), Doppler ultrasound of legs (to look for a source thrombus) or  $V/Q$  scan.



may be seen: tall peaked P waves in lead II, right axis deviation and right bundle branch block. Arterial blood gases show hypoxaemia and hypocapnia with massive emboli.

- Plasma D-dimers are a subset of fibrinogen degradation products released into the circulation when a clot begins to dissolve. D-dimers are, however, elevated in many other conditions (e.g. cancer, pregnancy, post-operatively) and a positive result is not diagnostic of thromboembolic disease. The value of D-dimer testing is in patients with a low pre-test clinical probability score (Table 10.14 and Emergency Box 10.5).
- Spiral CT with *intravenous* contrast (CT pulmonary angiography, CTPA) images the pulmonary vessels directly and is highly sensitive for the detection of large proximal pulmonary emboli. It is increasingly being used as the diagnostic test of choice for patients with suspected PE. Subsegmental emboli may be missed and occasionally patients may need further imaging (Emergency Box 10.5). One of the benefits over  $\dot{V}/\dot{Q}$  scan is the ability to detect alternative pathology that may explain the clinical presentation.
- Radionuclide lung scan ( $\dot{V}/\dot{Q}$  scan) demonstrates areas of ventilated lung with perfusion defects (ventilation-perfusion defects). Pulmonary embolism is excluded in patients with a normal scan. However, there is high incidence of non-diagnostic scans especially in patients with coexistent chronic lung disease who will then need further imaging.
- Ultrasound will detect clots in the pelvic or iliofemoral veins.
- MRI gives similar results and is used if CT is contraindicated.
- Echocardiography is diagnostic in massive PE and can be performed at the bedside. It demonstrates proximal thrombus and right ventricular dilatation.

## Management

This is summarized in Emergency Box 10.5. At present, the only definite indication for thrombolysis in acute massive embolism is persistent arterial hypotension. Surgical embolectomy is occasionally undertaken if thrombolysis is contraindicated or ineffective. In contrast, patients who are cardiovascularly stable and who have no co-existent serious medical pathology can be treated at home once the diagnosis is confirmed. Anti-coagulation is continued for 6 weeks to 6 months (see p. 246) depending on the likelihood of recurrence of thromboembolism, and lifelong treatment is indicated for recurrent emboli. Insertion of a vena caval filter is used to prevent further emboli when emboli recur despite adequate anticoagulation or in high-risk individuals where anti-coagulation is contraindicated.

## Pulmonary embolism in pregnancy

Pulmonary embolism occurs more frequently in pregnancy and is the leading cause of maternal death in the developed world. Compression

ultrasonography of the legs is the initial investigation. CTPA is required if ultrasound is normal and delivers a lower dose of radiation to the fetus than  $\dot{V}/\dot{Q}$  scanning. Warfarin is teratogenic and confirmed PE is treated with LMWH.

## MYOCARDIAL DISEASE

### Myocarditis

Myocarditis is an inflammation of the myocardium. The most common cause in the UK is viral, particularly Coxsackie virus infection, but it may also occur with diphtheria, rheumatic fever, radiation injury and some drugs.

#### Clinical features

Patients present with an acute illness characterized by fever and varying degrees of biventricular failure. Cardiac arrhythmias and pericarditis may also occur.

#### Investigations

- Chest X-ray may show cardiac enlargement.
- ECG shows non-specific T-wave and ST changes.
- The diagnosis is supported by demonstration of an increase in serum viral titres and inflammation on cardiac biopsy. The findings rarely influence management, and biopsy is not usually performed.

#### Management

Treatment is with bed rest and treatment of heart failure. The prognosis is generally good.

## CARDIOMYOPATHY

Cardiomyopathies comprise a group of diseases of the myocardium that affect the mechanical (hypertrophic, arrhythmogenic right ventricular, dilated and restrictive cardiomyopathy) or electrical function (conduction system disease and ion channelopathies, e.g. long QT syndrome) of the heart. Diagnosis of myocardial disease is usually by imaging (echocardiogram and cardiac MR).

### Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM)

HCM is characterized by marked ventricular hypertrophy in the absence of abnormal loading conditions such as hypertension and valvular disease. There is usually disproportionate involvement of the interventricular septum. The hypertrophic non-compliant ventricles impair diastolic filling, so that stroke volume is reduced. Most cases are familial, autosomal dominant, and

caused by mutations in genes encoding sarcomeric proteins, e.g. troponin T and  $\beta$ -myosin. It is the most common cause of sudden cardiac death in young people.

## Clinical features

Patients may be symptom-free (and detected through family screening) or have breathlessness, angina or syncope. Complications include sudden death, atrial and ventricular arrhythmias, thromboembolism, infective endocarditis and heart failure. The carotid pulse is jerky because of rapid ejection and sudden obstruction to the ventricular outflow during systole. An ejection systolic murmur occurs because of left ventricular outflow obstruction, and the pansystolic murmur of functional mitral regurgitation may also be heard.

## Investigations

- ECG is almost always abnormal. A pattern of left ventricular hypertrophy with no discernible cause is diagnostic.
- Cardiac imaging shows ventricular hypertrophy (on echo and MR) and fibrosis (on MR).
- Genetic analysis may confirm the diagnosis and provide prognostic information.

## Management

Amiodarone reduces the risk of arrhythmias and sudden death. Individuals at highest risk are fitted with an implantable cardiac defibrillator. Chest pain and dyspnoea are treated with  $\beta$ -blockers and verapamil. In selected cases outflow tract gradients are reduced by surgical resection or alcohol ablation of the septum, or by dual-chamber pacing.

## Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM)

DCM is characterized by a dilated left ventricle which contracts poorly. Inheritance is autosomal dominant in the familial disease.

## Clinical features

Shortness of breath is usually the first complaint; less often patients present with embolism (from mural thrombus) or arrhythmia. Subsequently there is progressive heart failure with the symptoms and signs of biventricular failure.

## Investigations

- Chest X-ray may show cardiac enlargement.
- ECG is often abnormal. The changes are non-specific and include arrhythmias and T-wave flattening.

- Cardiac imaging shows dilated ventricles with global hypokinesis. Cardiac MR may show other aetiologies of left ventricular dysfunction, e.g. previous myocardial infarction.

Other tests such as coronary angiography, viral and autoimmune screen and endomyocardial biopsy may be needed to exclude other diseases (Table 10.15) that present with the clinical features of DCM.

## Management

Heart failure and atrial fibrillation are treated in the conventional way (pp. 440, 429). Cardiac resynchronization therapy and implantable cardiac defibrillators are used in patients with NYHA III/IV grading. Severe cardiomyopathy is treated with cardiac transplantation.

### Primary restrictive cardiomyopathy

The rigid myocardium restricts diastolic ventricular filling and the clinical features resemble those of constrictive pericarditis (see later). In the UK the most common cause is amyloidosis. The ECG, chest X-ray and echocardiogram are often abnormal, but the findings are non-specific. Diagnosis is by cardiac catheterization, which shows characteristic pressure changes. An endomyocardial biopsy may be taken during the catheter procedure, thus providing histological diagnosis. There is no specific treatment and the prognosis is poor, with most patients dying less than a year after diagnosis. Cardiac transplantation is performed in selected cases.

### Arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy

There is progressive fibro-adipose replacement of the wall of the right ventricle. The typical presentation is ventricular tachycardia or sudden death in a young man.

**Table 10.15** Heart muscle disease presenting with features of dilated cardiomyopathy

|                                       |
|---------------------------------------|
| Ischaemia                             |
| Hypertension                          |
| Congenital heart disease              |
| Peripartum cardiomyopathy             |
| Infections, e.g. cytomegalovirus, HIV |
| Alcohol excess                        |
| Muscular dystrophy                    |
| Amyloidosis                           |
| Haemochromatosis                      |

## PERICARDIAL DISEASE

The normal pericardium is a fibroelastic sac containing a thin layer of fluid (50 mL) that surrounds the heart and roots of the great vessels.

### Acute pericarditis

#### Aetiology

In the UK, acute inflammation of the pericardium is most commonly due to viral infection (Coxsackie B, echovirus, HIV infection) or follows myocardial infarction. Other causes include uraemia, autoimmune rheumatic diseases, trauma, infection (bacterial, tuberculosis, fungal), and malignancy (breast, lung, leukaemia and lymphoma).

#### Clinical features

There is sharp retrosternal chest pain which is characteristically relieved by leaning forward. Pain may be worse on inspiration and radiate to the neck and shoulders. The cardinal clinical sign is a pericardial friction rub, which may be transient.

#### Diagnosis

The ECG is diagnostic. There is concave upwards (saddle shaped) ST segment elevation across all leads and return towards baseline as inflammation subsides. ST segment elevation is convex upwards in myocardial infarction and limited to the leads that face the infarct.

#### Management

Treatment is of the underlying disorder plus NSAIDs. Systemic corticosteroids are used in resistant cases. NSAIDs should not be used in the few days following myocardial infarction as they are associated with a higher rate of myocardial rupture. Complications of acute pericarditis are pericardial effusion and chronic pericarditis (>6–12 months).

### Pericardial effusion and tamponade

Pericardial effusion is an accumulation of fluid in the pericardial sac which may result from any of the causes of pericarditis. Hypothyroidism also causes a pericardial effusion which rarely compromises ventricular function. Pericardial tamponade is a medical emergency and occurs when a large amount of pericardial fluid (which has often accumulated rapidly) restricts diastolic ventricular filling and causes a marked reduction in cardiac output.

## Clinical features

The effusion obscures the apex beat and the heart sounds are soft. The signs of pericardial tamponade are hypotension, tachycardia and an elevated jugular venous pressure, which paradoxically rises with inspiration (Kussmaul's sign). There is invariably pulsus paradoxus (a fall in blood pressure of more than 10 mmHg on inspiration). This is the result of increased venous return to the right side of the heart during inspiration. The increased right ventricular volume thus occupies more space within the rigid pericardium and impairs left ventricular filling.

## Investigations

- Chest X-ray shows a large globular heart.
- ECG shows low-voltage complexes.
- Echocardiography is diagnostic, showing an echo-free space around the heart.
- Invasive tests to establish the cause of the effusion may only be necessary with a persistent effusion, if a purulent or tuberculous effusion is suspected, or if the effusion is not known to be secondary to an underlying illness. Pericardiocentesis (aspiration of fluid under echocardiographic guidance) and pericardial biopsy for culture, cytology/histology and PCR (for tuberculosis) give a greater diagnostic yield with large effusions.

## Management

The treatment of tamponade is emergency pericardiocentesis. Pericardial fluid is drained percutaneously by introducing a needle into the pericardial sac. If the effusion recurs, in spite of treatment of the underlying cause, excision of a pericardial segment may be necessary. Fluid is then absorbed through the pleural and mediastinal lymphatics.

## Constrictive pericarditis

In the UK, most cases of constrictive pericarditis are idiopathic in origin or result from intrapericardial haemorrhage during heart surgery.

## Clinical features

The heart becomes encased within a rigid fibrotic peri-cardial sac which prevents adequate diastolic filling of the ventricles. The clinical features resemble those of right-sided heart failure, with jugular venous distension, dependent oedema, hepatomegaly and ascites. Kussmaul's sign (JVP rises paradoxically with inspiration) is usually present and there may be pulsus paradoxus, atrial fibrillation and, on auscultation, a pericardial knock caused by rapid ventricular filling. Clinically, constrictive pericarditis cannot be distinguished from restrictive cardiomyopathy (p. 478).

## Investigations

A chest X-ray shows a normal heart size and pericardial calcification (best seen on the lateral film). Diagnosis is made by CT or MRI, which shows pericardial thickening and calcification.

## Management

Treatment is by surgical excision of the pericardium.

## SYSTEMIC HYPERTENSION

The level of blood pressure can be said to be abnormal when it is associated with a clear increase in morbidity and mortality from heart disease, stroke and renal failure. This level varies with age, sex, race and country. The definition of hypertension is over 140/90 mmHg, based on at least two readings on separate occasions. The validity of a single blood pressure measurement is unclear (blood pressure rises acutely in certain situations, e.g. visiting the doctor) and usually several readings are required to confirm a diagnosis of hypertension. Occasionally, ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (blood pressure measured over a 24-hour period using a non-invasive technique) is used if there is doubt as to the level of blood pressure.

## Aetiology

**Essential hypertension** Most patients with hypertension (80–90%) have no known underlying cause, i.e. 'primary' or 'essential' hypertension. Essential hypertension has a multifactorial aetiology:

- Genetic component
- Low birthweight
- Obesity
- Excess alcohol intake
- High salt intake
- The metabolic syndrome (see p. 160).

**Secondary hypertension** This is the result of a specific and potentially treatable cause:

- Renal disease accounts for over 80% of cases of secondary hypertension. The common causes are diabetic nephropathy, chronic glomerulonephritis, adult polycystic kidneys, chronic tubulointerstitial nephritis and renovascular disease
- Endocrine disease (p. 655): Conn's syndrome, adrenal hyperplasia, pheochromocytoma, Cushing's syndrome and acromegaly
- Coarctation of the aorta is a congenital narrowing of the aorta at, or just distal to, the insertion of the ductus arteriosus, i.e. distal to the left subclavian artery. There is hypertension due to decreased renal

perfusion, delayed (radiofemoral delay) pulses in the legs, a mid-late systolic murmur and 'rib notching' (collateral arteries erode the under-surface of ribs) on X-ray

- Pre-eclampsia occurring in the third trimester of pregnancy
- Drugs, including oestrogen-containing oral contraceptives, other steroids, NSAIDs and vasopressin.

## Clinical features

Hypertension is generally asymptomatic. Secondary causes of hypertension may be suggested by specific features, such as attacks of sweating and tachycardia in pheochromocytoma. Malignant or accelerated hypertension describes a rapid rise in blood pressure with severe hypertension (diastolic blood pressure > 120 mmHg). The characteristic histological change is fibrinoid necrosis of the vessel wall and untreated it will result in end-organ damage in the kidneys (haematuria, proteinuria, progressive kidney disease), brain (cerebral oedema and haemorrhage), retina (flame-shaped haemorrhages, cotton wool spots, hard exudates, and papilloedema) and cardiovascular system (acute heart failure and aortic dissection).

**Examination** In most patients the only finding is high blood pressure, but in others signs relating to the cause (e.g. abdominal bruit in renal artery stenosis, delayed femoral pulses in coarctation of the aorta) or the end-organ effects of hypertension may be present, e.g. loud second heart sound, left ventricular heave, fourth heart sound in hypertensive heart disease, and retinal abnormalities. The latter are graded according to severity:

- Grade 1 – increased tortuosity and reflectiveness of the retinal arteries (silver wiring)
- Grade 2 – grade 1 plus arteriovenous nipping
- Grade 3 – grade 2 plus flame-shaped haemorrhages and soft 'cotton wool' exudates
- Grade 4 – grade 3 plus papilloedema.

## Investigations

Investigations are carried out to identify end-organ damage and those patients with secondary causes of hypertension. Routine investigation should include:

- Serum urea and electrolytes may show evidence of renal impairment, in which case more specific renal investigations (e.g. renal ultrasound, renal angiography) are indicated. Hypokalaemia occurs in Conn's syndrome
- Urine Stix test for protein and blood, which may indicate renal disease (either the cause or the effect of hypertension)
- Blood glucose
- Serum lipids



- ECG may show evidence of left ventricular hypertrophy or myocardial ischaemia.

Young patients with hypertension (< 30 years) or those where a secondary cause is suspected (e.g. from clinical examination or abnormal baseline investigations) should undergo further investigation, e.g. urinary/plasma catecholamines for pheochromocytoma, investigation for renovascular hypertension (p. 374).

## Management

Treatment is begun immediately in patients with malignant or severe hypertension (BP  $\geq$  180/110 mmHg). In other patients treatment is started if repeated measurements show that sustained hypertension is present (Table 10.16). For most patients target blood pressure during treatment is 140/85 mmHg. For patients with diabetes, chronic kidney disease or cardiovascular disease a lower target of 130/80 mmHg is recommended.

Non-pharmacological measures in the treatment of hypertension include:

- Weight reduction (aim for BMI < 25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>)
- Low-fat and low saturated fat diet
- Low-salt diet (< 6 g sodium chloride per day)

**Table 10.16** Indications for treatment based on sustained BP (mmHg) recordings

| Severity              | Initial BP                | Intervention   |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|--|
| High normal           | $> \frac{130}{85}$        | Reassess in 5 years  |
| High normal           | $\frac{130-139}{85-89}$   | Lifestyle modification<br>Reassess yearly  |
| Mild hypertension     | $\frac{140-159}{90-99}$   | Group 1 – confirm over 12 weeks then treat<br>Group 2 – confirm over 12 weeks (monthly BP), treat if maintained<br>Group 3 – lifestyle modification, reassess yearly |
| Moderate hypertension | $\frac{160-179}{100-109}$ | Group 1 – confirm over 4 weeks then treat<br>Others – confirm over 4–12 weeks (weekly BP), treat if maintained   |
| Severe hypertension   | $> 180/110$               | Confirm over 1–2 weeks, then treat   |

*Group 1, patients with cardiovascular disease, target organ damage, or diabetes.*

*Group 2, patients with estimated 10-year cardiovascular disease risk  $\geq$  20% (p. 446).*

*Group 3, patients not in groups 1 or 2.*

- Limited alcohol consumption (<21 units and <14 units per week for men and women respectively)
- Dynamic exercise (at least 30 minutes brisk walk per day)
- Increased fruit and vegetable consumption
- Reduce cardiovascular risk by stopping smoking and increasing oily fish consumption.

In most hypertensive patients statins (p. 700) are also given to reduce the overall cardiovascular risk burden. Glycaemic control should be optimized in diabetics ( $\text{HbA}_{1c} < 7\%$ ). For each class of anti-hypertensive there will be indications and contraindications in specific patient groups. A single anti-hypertensive drug is used initially, but combination treatment will be needed in many patients to control blood pressure. In patients without compelling reasons for a particular drug class a treatment algorithm (ACD) is used to advise on the sequencing of drugs and logical drug combinations (Fig. 10.17). This algorithm is based on the observation that younger people and Caucasians tend to have higher renin levels compared to older people or the black population.

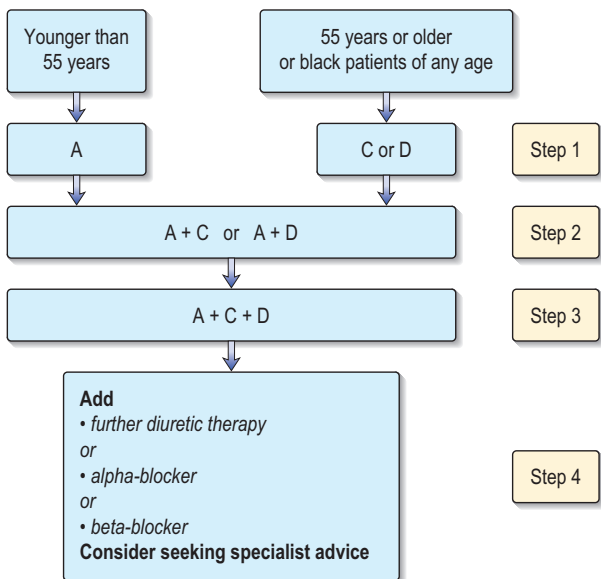
Thus the 'A' drugs which reduce blood pressure at least in part by suppression of the renin-angiotensin system are more effective as initial blood-pressure-lowering therapy in younger Caucasian patients.

**Diuretics** increase renal sodium and water excretion and directly dilate arterioles (p. 348). Loop diuretics, e.g. furosemide, and thiazide diuretics, e.g. bendroflumethiazide (bendrofluazide), are equally effective in lowering blood pressure, although thiazides are usually preferred, as the duration of action is longer, the diuresis is not so severe and they are cheaper. The major concern with thiazide diuretics is their adverse metabolic effects: increased serum cholesterol, hypokalaemia, hyperuricaemia (may precipitate gout) and impairment of glucose tolerance.

**$\beta$ -Adrenergic blocking agents** (p. 494) are no longer a preferred initial therapy for hypertension. They are used in younger patients particularly those with an intolerance or contraindication to ACE inhibitors and angiotensin-II receptor antagonists; women of child bearing potential; or patients with evidence of increased sympathetic drive.  $\beta$  blockers reduce renin production and sympathetic nervous system activity. Complications include bradycardia, bronchospasm, cold extremities, fatigue and weakness.

**ACE inhibitors** (p. 497) e.g. captopril, enalapril, lisinopril, and ramipril, block the conversion of angiotensin I to angiotensin II, which is a potent vasoconstrictor, and block degradation of bradykinin, which is a vasodilator. Side-effects include first-dose hypotension and cough, proteinuria, rashes and leucopenia in high doses. ACE inhibitors are contraindicated in renal artery stenosis because inhibition of the renin-angiotensin system in this instance may lead to loss of renal blood flow and infarction of the kidney.

**Angiotensin II receptor antagonists** (p. 498) e.g. losartan, valsartan, irbesartan and candesartan, selectively block receptors for angiotensin II.

**Abbreviations:**

A = ACE inhibitor

(angiotensin-II receptor antagonist if ACE intolerant)

C = calcium-channel blocker

D = thiazide-type diuretic

Black patients are those of African or Caribbean descent and not mixed-race, Asian or Chinese patients

**Fig. 10.17** Choosing drugs for patients newly diagnosed with hypertension. (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2006) Choosing drugs for patients newly diagnosed with hypertension. In: *CG 34 Hypertension: management of hypertension in adults in primary care (Quick Reference Guide)*. London: NICE. Available from [www.nice.org.uk/CG034](http://www.nice.org.uk/CG034). Reproduced with permission.)

They share some of the actions of ACE inhibitors and are useful in patients who cannot tolerate ACE inhibitors because of cough.

**Calcium antagonists** e.g. amlodipine and nifedipine, act predominantly by dilatation of peripheral arterioles. Side-effects are few and include bradycardia and cardiac conduction defects (verapamil and diltiazem), headaches, flushing and fluid retention.

**Other agents**  $\alpha$ -Blocking agents (e.g. doxazosin), hydralazine, and centrally acting agents (e.g. clonidine, moxonidine) may be indicated in specific circumstances. Aliskerin is a new anti-hypertensive and renin inhibitor. It is used alone or in combination with other agents.

## Management of severe hypertension

Patients with malignant (p. 482) or severe hypertension (diastolic BP > 140 mmHg) should be admitted to hospital for treatment. The aim should be to reduce the diastolic blood pressure slowly (over 24–48 hours) to about 100–110 mmHg and this is usually achieved with oral antihypertensives, e.g. atenolol or amlodipine. Sublingual and intravenous antihypertensives are not recommended because they may produce a precipitous fall in blood pressure leading to cerebral infarction. When rapid control of blood pressure is required (e.g. aortic dissection), the agent of choice is intravenous sodium nitroprusside (starting dose 0.3  $\mu$ g/kg/min, i.e. 100 mg nitroprusside in 250 mL saline at 2–5 mL/h) or labetalol.

## ARTERIAL AND VENOUS DISEASE

### Aortic aneurysms

An aneurysm is a permanent localized dilatation of an artery. They may be asymptomatic or cause symptoms by pressure effects or vessel rupture, occasionally with fistula formation, or they may be a source of emboli. Aortic aneurysms (vessel diameter > 3 cm) are usually abdominal and most result from a degenerative process and present in elderly men. Some are the result of connective tissue disease.

**Abdominal** Abdominal aortic aneurysms can be asymptomatic (and found as a pulsating mass on abdominal examination or as calcification on a plain X-ray), cause symptoms due to pressure effects (epigastric or back pain) or rupture. The latter is a surgical emergency presenting with epigastric pain radiating to the back, and hypovolaemic shock. Diagnosis is by ultrasonography or CT scan. Surgical replacement of the aneurysmal segment with a prosthetic graft is indicated for a symptomatic aneurysm or large asymptomatic aneurysms (>5.5 cm). In patients that are poor surgical risks, endovascular repair with insertion of an aortic stent is being increasingly employed.

**Thoracic** Cystic medial necrosis and atherosclerosis are the usual causes of thoracic aneurysms. Cardiovascular syphilis is no longer a common cause. Thoracic aneurysms may be asymptomatic, cause pressure on local structures (causing back pain, dysphagia and cough) or result in aortic regurgitation if the aortic root is involved.

**Dissecting aortic aneurysm** Aortic dissection results from a tear in the intima: blood under high pressure creates a false lumen in the diseased media. Typically there is an abrupt onset of severe, tearing central chest pain,

radiating through to the back. Involvement of branch arteries may produce neurological signs, absent pulses and unequal blood pressure in the arms. The chest X-ray shows a widened mediastinum and the diagnosis is confirmed by CT scanning and transoesophageal echocardiography or MRI. Management involves urgent control of blood pressure (p. 486) and surgical repair for proximal aortic dissection.

## Raynaud's disease and phenomenon

Raynaud's phenomenon consists of intermittent spasm in the arteries supplying the fingers and toes. It is usually precipitated by cold and relieved by heat. There is initial pallor (resulting from vasoconstriction) followed by cyanosis and, finally, redness from hyperaemia. Raynaud's disease (no underlying disorder) occurs most commonly in young women and must be differentiated from secondary causes of Raynaud's phenomenon, e.g. autoimmune rheumatic disease and  $\beta$ -blocker therapy. Treatment is by keeping the hands and feet warm, stopping smoking and stopping  $\beta$ -blockers. Medical treatment includes oral nifedipine and occasionally prostacyclin infusions. Lumbar sympathectomy may help lower limb symptoms.

## Venous disease

**Superficial thrombophlebitis** This usually occurs in the leg. The vein is painful, tender and hard, with overlying redness. Treatment is with simple analgesia, e.g. NSAIDs. Anticoagulation is not necessary as embolism does not occur.

**Deep venous thrombosis** Thrombosis can occur in any vein, but those of the pelvis and leg are the most common sites. The risk factors for deep vein thrombosis (DVT) are listed on page 238.

## Clinical features

DVT is often asymptomatic but the leg may be warm and swollen, with calf tenderness and superficial venous distension. The differential diagnosis includes ruptured Baker's cyst (p. 275), oedema from other causes and cellulitis.

## Investigations

Measurement of serum D-dimer is the initial investigation in patients with a low clinical probability score (Table 10.17) and no further investigation is indicated if D-dimers are normal. In all other patients venous compression ultrasonography is indicated which is a reliable test for iliofemoral thrombosis. It is not reliable for calf vein thrombosis and repeat scanning 1 week later with interim heparin treatment is indicated if the initial scan is negative and there is high index of clinical suspicion.

**Table 10.17** Wells score for the clinical probability of a deep venous thrombosis (DVT)

| History   | Score if present |                |            |
|---|------------------|----------------|------------|
| Lower limb trauma or surgery or immobilization in a plaster cast  | +1               |                |            |
| Bedridden for more than 3 days or surgery within the last 4 weeks   | +1               |                |            |
| Malignancy (including treatment up to 6 months previously)  | +1               |                |            |
| Tenderness along deep venous system   | +1               |                |            |
| <b>Clinical findings</b>  |                  |                |            |
| Entire limb swollen   | +1               |                |            |
| Calf swelling more than 3cm compared to asymptomatic side, measured at 10 cm below tibial tuberosity  | +1               |                |            |
| Pitting oedema (greater in symptomatic leg)   | +1               |                |            |
| Dilated collateral superficial veins (non-varicose)   | +1               |                |            |
| <b>Possible alternative diagnosis</b>   |                  |                |            |
| Alternative diagnosis (e.g. musculoskeletal injury, haematoma, chronic oedema, cellulitis of the leg, arthritis of the leg, Baker's cyst) as likely or greater than that of DVT | -2               |                |            |
| Total score   | ≤0               | 1–2            | ≥3         |
| Risk of DVT   | 3% (low)         | 17% (moderate) | 75% (high) |

## Management

This is discussed on page 239.

The main aim of therapy is to prevent pulmonary embolism. Anticoagulation is initially with heparin and subsequently with warfarin, continued for 3 months unless there had been a definite risk factor prior to presentation, e.g. bed rest, when treatment is usually for 4 weeks. Thrombolytic therapy is occasionally used for patients with a large iliofemoral thrombosis.

The main complications of DVT are pulmonary embolus, post-thrombotic syndrome (permanent pain, swelling, oedema and sometimes venous eczema may result from destruction of the deep-vein valves) and recurrence of thrombosis. Elastic support stockings are used for the post-thrombotic syndrome.

## THERAPEUTICS FOR THE CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM

### ELECTRICAL CARADIOVERSION

Cardioversion is the delivery of energy that is synchronized to the QRS complex, whereas defibrillation is non-synchronized delivery of energy, i.e. the shock is delivered randomly during the cardiac cycle (Table 10.18). In the patient who has had a cardiac arrest and is not responding to repeated defibrillation, a difficult decision is when to stop resuscitation and defibrillation efforts. This depends on the patient, the circumstances of the arrest and how long the patient has had a non-perfusing cardiac rhythm. In general, if a patient arrests in hospital and resuscitation has not resulted in a perfusing cardiac rhythm after 30 minutes, then further attempts are unlikely to be successful. The prognosis is poorer in patients who arrest outside hospital. There are exceptions: resuscitation is continued for longer in a hypothermic patient.

#### Indications

- Elective cardioversion
  - atrial tachyarrhythmias
- Emergency cardioversion
  - atrial tachyarrhythmias causing haemodynamic compromise, e.g. hypotension, pulmonary oedema
  - ventricular tachycardia (VT)
  - ventricular fibrillation (VF).

#### Contraindications

- Digitalis toxicity (relative contraindication) – induction of ventricular arrhythmias by cardioversion is more likely

**Table 10.18** Energy levels for biphasic defibrillators

| Arrhythmia                                    | Initial shock energy (J) |
|---|--------------------------|
| Broad-complex tachycardia                     | 120–150                  |
| Atrial flutter and narrow-complex tachycardia | 70–120                   |
| Atrial fibrillation                           | 120–150                  |
| Ventricular arrhythmias                       | 150–200                  |

- Atrial fibrillation with onset more than 24 hours previously (due to risk of embolism) unless patient has high-risk symptoms and signs (p. 420).

## DRUGS FOR ARRHYTHMIAS

### Adenosine

#### Mechanism of action

Adenosine is a purine nucleotide. It acts on adenosine receptors and enhances the flow of potassium out of myocardial cells and produces hyperpolarization of the cell membrane and stabilizes the cell membrane. It has potent effects on the SA node, producing sinus bradycardia, and slows impulse conduction through the AV node.

#### Indications

The main indication is reversion to sinus rhythm of atrioventricular junctional tachycardia.

#### Preparations and dose

3 mg/mL.

**Intravenous injection** By rapid i.v. injection into a central or large peripheral vein, 6 mg over 2 seconds with cardiac monitoring and resuscitation equipment available; if necessary followed by 12 mg after 1–2 minutes, and then 12 mg after a further 1–2 minutes; increments should not be given if high-level AV block develops at any dose.

#### Side-effects

Unwanted effects are common; however, they are usually transient. Patients should be warned before drug administration of side-effects usually lasting less than 1 minute:

- Bradycardia and AV block
- Facial flushing, headache, chest pain or tightness
- Bronchospasm.

#### Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in asthma, second- or third-degree AV block and sick sinus syndrome (unless pacemaker fitted).



## Amiodarone hydrochloride

### Mechanism of action

Class III (Vaughan Williams' classification) drug action which prolongs the duration of the action potential, thus increasing the absolute refractory period. Inhibits the potassium channels involved in repolarization.

### Indications

Intravenous injection of amiodarone is used in cardiopulmonary resuscitation for ventricular fibrillation or pulseless tachycardia unresponsive to other interventions. Oral and i.v. amiodarone is used in the treatment of arrhythmias (supraventricular and ventricular tachycardia, atrial fibrillation and flutter) particularly when other drugs are ineffective or contraindicated. In the non-emergency setting it should only be initiated under specialist supervision. Unlike many other antiarrhythmic drugs, amiodarone causes little or no myocardial depression.

### Preparations and dose

*Tablets: 100 mg, 200 mg; Injection: 30 mg/mL or concentrate 50 mg/mL.*

**Oral** 200 mg three times daily for 1 week reduced to 200 mg twice daily for a further week; maintenance, usually 200 mg daily or the minimum required to control the arrhythmia.

**Intravenous** Via central line catheter (in an emergency, e.g. ventricular tachycardia, can be given via a large peripheral line, but is a vesicant drug and therefore requires caution), initially 5 mg/kg in 250 mL glucose 5% (drug incompatible with sodium chloride) over 20–120 minutes with ECG monitoring. This may be repeated if necessary to a maximum of 1.2 g in 24 hours in 500 mL. As soon as an adequate response has been obtained, oral therapy should be initiated and the i.v. therapy phased out.

### Side-effects

Amiodarone contains iodine and can cause both hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism. Thyroid function tests including  $T_3$  should be measured before treatment and then every 6 months of treatment. Also liver toxicity and liver biochemistry should be measured before and then every 6 months of treatment. Other side-effects are reversible corneal microdeposits (drivers may be dazzled by headlights at night), phototoxic skin reactions (advise patients to use total sunblock creams), slate-grey skin pigmentation, pneumonitis and peripheral neuropathy.

### Cautions/contraindications

It is contraindicated in sinus bradycardia or sinoatrial heart block, unless pacemaker fitted, iodine sensitivity and thyroid dysfunction.

Many drugs interact with amiodarone including warfarin and digoxin (check *National Formulary* for full list). It has a very long half-life (extending to several weeks) and many months may be required to achieve steady-state concentrations; this is also important when drug interactions are considered.

## Flecainide

### Mechanism of action

Class Ic (Vaughan Williams' classification) antiarrhythmic drug. It is a membrane-depressant drug that reduces the rate of entry of sodium into the cell (sodium-channel blocker). This may slow conduction, delay recovery or reduce the spontaneous discharge rate of myocardial cells.

### Indications

AV nodal reciprocating tachycardia, arrhythmias associated with accessory conducting pathways (e.g. Wolff–Parkinson–White syndrome), paroxysmal atrial fibrillation. Occasionally it is used in ventricular tachyarrhythmias resistant to other treatments.

### Preparations and dose

SVT – 50 mg twice daily increased to maximum 300 mg daily.

'On demand' treatment for AF – 200 mg or 300 mg if weight greater than 70 kg, at the onset of paroxysm.

### Side-effects

These include dizziness, visual disturbances, dyspnoea, palpitations, pro-arrhythmic effects, headache, fatigue and nausea in 5–10% of patients. Rarely, bronchospasm, heart block, bone marrow suppression and increased ventricular rate in AF/flutter are seen.

### Cautions/contraindications

These comprise significant coronary artery disease; left ventricular dysfunction or other forms of significant structural heart disease; second degree or greater AV block and bundle branch block. Interactions with other drugs can occur including  $\beta$ -blockers and calcium channel blockers (check *National Formulary* for full list).

## Lidocaine hydrochloride

### Mechanism of action

Class 1b (Vaughan Williams' classification) antiarrhythmic drug. This is a membrane-depressant drug that reduces the rate of entry of sodium into the

cell (sodium-channel blocker). This may slow conduction, delay recovery or reduce the spontaneous discharge rate of myocardial cells. It shortens the duration of the action potential.

## Indications

These include ventricular arrhythmias, especially after myocardial infarction.

## Preparations and dose

*Injection: 2%, 20 mg/mL; Infusion 0.1% (1 mg/mL), 0.2% (2 mg/mL).*

**Intravenous injection** 100 mg as a bolus over a few minutes (50 mg in lighter patients or those whose circulation is severely impaired) followed immediately by infusion (with ECG monitoring) of 4 mg/min for 30 minutes, 2 mg/min for 2 hours, then 1 mg/min; reduce concentration further if infusion continued beyond 24 hours.

## Side-effects

These primarily comprise dizziness, paraesthesias, drowsiness and confusion particularly if the injection is too rapid. Other side-effects are convulsions, hypotension, bradycardia and hypersensitivity.

## Cautions/contraindications

It is contraindicated in sinoatrial disorders, all grades of AV block, severe myocardial depression, acute porphyria. There is increased myocardial depression with  $\beta$ -blockers and other anti-arrhythmics and also an increased risk of ventricular arrhythmias with anti-psychotics that prolong QT interval.

## $\beta$ -Blockers

See page 495.

## Digoxin

### Mechanism of action

This drug blocks AV conduction and reduces heart rate by enhancing vagal nerve activity and inhibiting sympathetic activity. It is positively inotropic (enhancing strength of cardiac contraction) by inhibition of  $\text{Na}^+/\text{K}^+$ -ATPase and secondary activation of the  $\text{Na}^+/\text{Ca}^{2+}$  membrane exchange pump thereby increasing intracellular calcium levels.

### Indications

It is used in heart failure with atrial fibrillation or patients in sinus rhythm who remain symptomatic despite ACE inhibitor,  $\beta$ -blocker and diuretics.

It is also used for rate control in sedentary patients with atrial fibrillation/flutter.

## Preparations and dose

*Tablets: 62.5, 125 and 250 µg. Injection: 250 µg/mL*

Check renal function and electrolytes before starting therapy; reduce dose in the elderly and in renal impairment.

**Oral** rapid digitalization for atrial fibrillation/flutter 0.75–1.5 mg in divided doses over 24 hours and then maintenance of 125–250 µg once daily according to heart rate and renal function. For heart failure (sinus rhythm) 62.5–125 µg once daily is given.

**Intravenous infusion** for emergency loading dose for atrial fibrillation or flutter 0.75–1 mg (diluted in glucose 5% or sodium chloride 0.9% to a concentration of not more than 62.5 µg/mL) over at least 2 hours and then maintenance dose the next day by mouth.

## Side-effects

These include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, conduction disturbances blurred or yellow vision and ventricular arrhythmias. Side-effects are common because of the narrow therapeutic index (the margin between effectiveness and toxicity). Hypokalaemia and renal impairment (reduce dose) increase the risk of toxicity. In suspected toxicity, measure plasma potassium concentration first and correct if hypokalaemia is evident. Plasma digoxin concentrations should be measured if toxicity is suspected; concentrations of >2 mmol/L usually suggest toxicity. In severe toxicity give anti-digoxin antibodies.

## Contraindications

Contraindications are arrhythmias associated with accessory conduction pathways, e.g. Wolff–Parkinson–White syndrome, because accessory pathway is not affected and intermittent complete heart block or second degree AV block. Caution should be demonstrated in left ventricular outflow tract obstruction. Diltiazem, verapamil, spirinolactone and amiodarone inhibit renal excretion of digoxin; avoid with amiodarone and measure plasma levels with other drugs (see *National Formulary* for full interaction list). Tetracycline, erythromycin and possibly other macrolides enhance the effect of digoxin. Rifampicin reduces serum concentrations.

## DRUGS FOR HEART FAILURE

### Diuretics

See Table 7.4 and pages 348–350.

## $\beta$ -Blockers

### Mechanism of action

The  $\beta$ -adrenoceptors in the heart, peripheral vasculature, bronchi, pancreas and liver are blocked. They decrease heart rate, reduce the force of cardiac contraction and lower blood pressure. These effects reduce myocardial oxygen demand and give more time for coronary perfusion.

### Indications

Main indicators are angina, myocardial infarction, arrhythmias, stable heart failure, hypertension, alleviation of symptoms of anxiety, prophylaxis of migraine, prevention of variceal bleeding and symptomatic treatment of hyperthyroidism (no effect on thyroid function tests).

### Preparations and dose

Most  $\beta$ -blockers are equally effective, but there are differences between them which may affect the choice in particular diseases or individual patients, e.g. atenolol and metoprolol are used in angina; sotalol in the management of supraventricular and ventricular arrhythmias; propranolol in the treatment of hyperthyroidism, prevention of variceal bleeding and prophylaxis of migraine (usually); and bisoprolol and carvedilol in the management of heart failure (usually specialist initiated).

### Propranolol

*Tablets: 10 mg, 40 mg, 80 mg, 160 mg; Oral solution: 5 mg/mL; Injection 1 mg/mL.*

#### Oral

- Portal hypertension: initially 40 mg twice daily, increased according to heart rate; maximum 160 mg twice daily
- Angina: initially 40 mg two to three times daily; maintenance 120–240 mg daily
- Arrhythmias: anxiety, hyperthyroidism, migraine prophylaxis, essential tremor, 10–40 mg three times daily
- Hypertension: initially 80 mg twice daily, increased at weekly intervals as required; maintenance 160–320 mg daily.

**Intravenous** Arrhythmias and thyrotoxic crisis: 1 mg over 1 minute; if necessary repeat at 2-minute intervals; maximum 10 mg.

### Atenolol

*Tablets: 25 mg, 50 mg, 100 mg.*

**Oral**

- Angina: 25–100 mg daily in one or two doses
- After MI: 25–100 mg daily
- Hypertension: 25–50 mg daily.

**Intravenous** For arrhythmias: 2.5 mg at a rate of 1 mg/min, repeated at 5-minute intervals to a maximum of 10 mg, or by infusion 150 µg/kg over 20 minutes, repeated every 12 hours if required.

**Bisoprolol**

*Tablets: 1.25 mg, 2.5 mg, 3.75 mg, 5 mg, 7.5 mg, 10 mg.*

- Hypertension and angina, usually 5–10 mg once daily; maximum 20 mg daily.
- Heart failure, initially 1.25 mg daily titrated up at weekly intervals over 8–10 weeks to maximum 10 mg daily.

**Metoprolol**

*Tablets: 50 mg, 100 mg; Injection: 1 mg/mL.*

**Oral**

- After MI: 100 mg twice daily
- Angina, arrhythmias, anxiety, thyrotoxicosis, migraine prophylaxis, essential tremor: 50–100 mg two to three times daily
- Hypertension: 50–100 mg twice daily.

**Intravenous** For arrhythmias: up to 5 mg at a rate of 1–2 mg/min, repeated after 5 minutes to a maximum of 10–15 mg.

**Sotalol**

*Tablets: 40 mg, 80 mg, 160 mg; Injection: 10 mg/mL.*

Sotalol use is limited to the treatment of ventricular arrhythmias or the prevention of supraventricular arrhythmias.

**Oral** 80 mg daily in one to two divided doses, increased gradually at intervals of 2–3 days to usual dose of 160–320 mg daily.

**Intavenous** Over 10 minutes: 20–120 mg with ECG monitoring repeated at 6-hourly intervals if necessary.

**Side-effects**

Side-effects include bradycardia, exacerbation of intermittent claudication, lethargy, nightmares, hallucinations, deterioration of glucose tolerance and interference with metabolic and autonomic responses to hypoglycaemia in diabetics.

**Contraindications**

These comprise asthma, severe peripheral arterial disease, second- or third-degree heart block, marked bradycardia, hypotension, phaeochromocytoma (apart from specific use with alpha-blockers).

## DRUGS AFFECTING THE RENIN–ANGIOTENSIN SYSTEM

Renin produced by the kidney in response to glomerular hypoperfusion catalyzes cleavage of angiotensinogen (produced by the liver) to angiotensin (AT), which in turn is cleaved by angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) to angiotensin II, which acts on two receptors. The AT<sub>1</sub> receptor mediates the vasoconstrictor effects of AT. The actions of the AT<sub>2</sub> receptor are less well defined.

### Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors

#### Mechanism of action

These drugs inhibit the conversion of angiotensin I to angiotensin II and reduce angiotensin II mediated vasoconstriction.

#### Indications

The main indicators are heart failure, hypertension, diabetic nephropathy and ischaemic heart disease.

#### Preparations and dose

##### Perindopril

*Tablets: 2 mg, 4 mg, 8 mg.*

- Hypertension, initially 4 mg once daily (use 2 mg if in addition to diuretic, in the elderly, in renal impairment) subsequently adjusted according to response to maximum 8 mg daily
- Heart failure: initially 2 mg once daily, increased after at least 2 weeks to maintenance usually 4 mg daily
- Ischaemic heart disease, diabetic nephropathy: 4 mg daily increased after 2 weeks to 8 mg daily.

##### Lisinopril

*Tablets: 2.5 mg, 5 mg, 10 mg, 20 mg.*

- Hypertension: initially 10 mg once daily (2.5–5 mg if in addition to diuretic, in the elderly, in renal impairment), usual maintenance 20 mg daily, maximum 80 mg daily
- Heart failure: initially 2.5 mg once daily, increased by 10 mg every 2 weeks if tolerated to maintenance 35 mg daily
- Ischaemic heart disease, diabetic nephropathy: 5–10 mg daily. Immediately post STEMI start at 2.5 mg if systolic BP 100–120 mm Hg and gradually increase to maintenance dose of 5–10 mg. Do not give if systolic BP < 100 mm Hg.

## Ramipril

Tablets: 1.25 mg, 2.5 mg, 5 mg, 10 mg.

- Hypertension: initially 1.25 mg daily, increased weekly to maintenance 2.5–5 mg daily, maximum 10 mg once daily
- Heart failure: initially 1.25 mg daily, increased if necessary to maximum 10 mg daily
- Ischaemic heart disease, diabetic nephropathy: 2.5 mg twice daily, maintenance 2.5–5 mg daily.

## Side-effects

After the first dose side-effects can include hypotension (use small initial doses) in heart failure and patients taking diuretics, dry cough, hyperkalaemia, sudden deterioration in renal function in patients with renal artery stenosis and in patients taking NSAIDs (check urea and electrolytes 1–2 weeks after starting treatment), loss of taste, rashes and hypersensitivity reactions.

## Cautions/contraindications

These include bilateral renal artery stenosis, pregnancy, angio-oedema, severe renal failure, severe or symptomatic mitral or aortic stenosis and hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy (risk of hypotension).

## Angiotensin II receptor antagonists

### Mechanism of action

These are antagonist of the type 1 subtype of the angiotensin II receptor (AT<sub>1</sub> receptor).

### Indications

Indications include hypertension, heart failure or diabetic nephropathy in patients intolerant to ACE inhibitors because of cough.

### Preparations and dose

#### Candesartan

Tablets: 2 mg, 4 mg, 8 mg, 16 mg, 32 mg.

- Hypertension: initially 8 mg daily, increased as necessary to 32 mg daily
- Heart failure: initially 4 mg once daily increased at intervals of at least 2 weeks to target dose of 32 mg.

#### Valsartan

Capsules: 40 mg, 80 mg, 160 mg.



- Hypertension: 80 mg once daily (40 mg in caution groups) and increased if necessary after 4 weeks to 160 mg daily
- Ischaemic heart disease: 20 mg twice daily increased gradually to 160 mg twice daily.

## Side-effects

These include postural hypotension, rash, abnormalities in liver biochemistry and hyperkalaemia.

## Caution/contraindications

Lower doses should be given in liver and renal impairment, patients taking high-dose diuretics and the elderly (over 75 years). Caution should be applied in renal artery stenosis, aortic or mitral valve stenosis and in obstructive hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.

## NITRATES, CALCIUM-CHANNEL BLOCKERS AND POTASSIUM-CHANNEL ACTIVATORS

Nitrates, calcium-channel blockers and potassium-channel activators have a vasodilating effect leading to a reduction in venous return, which reduces left ventricular work and dilatation of the coronary circulation.

### Nitrates

#### Mechanism of action

An increase in cyclic guanosine monophosphate (cGMP) in vascular smooth muscle cells causes a decrease in intracellular calcium levels and smooth muscle relaxation with dilatation of veins and arteries, including the coronary circulation. They reduce venous return which reduces left ventricular work.

#### Indications

These drugs are used as a prophylaxis for and in the treatment of angina, as an adjunct in congestive heart failure and intravenously in the treatment of acute heart failure and acute coronary syndrome.

#### Preparations and dose

##### Glyceryl trinitrate – short acting

*Sublingual tablets: 300 µg, 500 µg, 600 µg (expire after 8 weeks once bottle opened); spray 400 µg/dose.*

- Angina: one or two tablets or sprays under the tongue (sublingual use avoids hepatic first-pass metabolism) repeated as required. More

effective if taken before exertion known to precipitate angina. Tablets (unlike spray) can be spat out if side-effects occur (headache, hypotension).

### Glyceryl trinitrate – transdermal

*Patches releasing approx: 5 mg, 10 mg, 15 mg/24 h.*

- Angina: apply patch to chest or outer arm and replace at different site every 24 hours. If tolerance (with reduced therapeutic effect) is suspected, the patch should be left off for 4–8 consecutive hours – usually at night as this is the least symptomatic period.

### Glyceryl trinitrate – long-acting tablets

*Buccal tablets: 2 mg, 3 mg, 5 mg.*

- Angina: 1–5 mg three times daily
- Heart failure: 5 mg (increased to 10 mg in severe cases) three times daily.

### Glyceryl trinitrate injection

*5 mg/mL, diluted to 100 µg/ml, i.e. 5 mg in 50 ml, in glucose 5% or sodium chloride 0.9% administered via a syringe pump.*

- 0.6–0.9 mg/h i.v., then increase dose cautiously until response is achieved, keeping systolic BP > 100 mmHg. Usual range 2–10 mg/h.

### Isosorbide mononitrate

*Tablets: 10 mg, 20 mg, 40 mg.*

- 10–40 mg twice daily, 8 hours apart rather than 12 to prevent nitrate tolerance.

### Isosorbide mononitrate (modified release)

*Tablets: 25 mg, 50 mg, 60 mg.*

- 25–60 mg once daily. Reserve for patients where twice-daily dosing (above) has proved unacceptable. Build up dose gradually to avoid headaches. Up to 120 mg daily may be required.

## Side-effects

These are mainly due to vasodilating properties and are minimized by initiating therapy with a low dose. They include flushing, headache, postural hypotension, and methaemoglobinaemia (p. 826) with excessive dosage.

## Cautions/contraindications

Nitrates are contraindicated in hypotension and hypovolaemia, hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy, aortic stenosis, mitral stenosis, cardiac tamponade and constrictive pericarditis. Nitrates potentiate the effect of other

vasodilators and hypotensive drugs. Sildenafil is contraindicated in patients taking nitrates.

## Calcium-channel blockers

This group of drugs includes different modified-release preparations of calcium channel blockers that have different bioavailabilities and so the brand should be stated on the prescription.

### Mechanism of action

These drugs block calcium channels and modify calcium uptake into myocardium and vascular smooth muscle cells. The dihydropyridine calcium-channel blockers (e.g. amlodipine, nifedipine, nimodipine) are potent vasodilators with little effect on cardiac contractility or conduction. In contrast, verapamil and to a lesser extent diltiazem are weak vasodilators but depress cardiac conduction and contractility.

### Indications

Indicators for use are hypertension and prophylaxis for angina. Verapamil is used in the treatment of some arrhythmias. Nimodipine is for the prevention of ischaemic neurological deficits following aneurysmal subarachnoid haemorrhage.

### Preparations and dose

#### Amlodipine

*Tablets: 5 mg, 10 mg.*

- 5–10 mg once daily.

#### Verapamil

*Tablets: 40 mg, 80 mg, 120 mg, 160 mg; oral solution: 40 mg/5mL; modified-release (slow-release, SR) tablets: 120 mg, 240 mg; injection: 2.5 mg/mL.*

- Angina: 80–120 mg three times daily. SR 240 mg once or twice daily
- Hypertension: 240–480 mg daily in two to three divided doses. SR 120–240 mg once or twice daily
- Supraventricular arrhythmias: oral 40–120 mg three times daily, i.v. 5–10 mg over 10 minutes, further 5 mg after 5–10 minutes if required.

#### Nifedipine modified release

*Adalat® LA tablets: 20 mg, 30 mg, 60 mg.*

- Angina: initially 30 mg once daily, increased if necessary to 90 mg once daily
- Hypertension: initially 20 mg once daily, increased if necessary.

## Diltiazem

Tablets: 60 mg.

- Angina: 60 mg three times daily.

### Diltiazem slow release

Capsules for twice daily use: 90 mg, 120 mg, 180 mg; capsules for once daily use: 120 mg, 180 mg, 240 mg, 300 mg.

- Hypertension: 120 mg twice daily
- Angina: 90 mg twice daily increased to 180 mg twice daily if required
- Angina and hypertension: 240 mg once daily increased to 300 mg once daily.

## Side-effects

These are mainly due to vasodilator properties: flushing, dizziness, tachycardia, hypotension, ankle swelling and headache. Side-effects are minimized by starting with a low dose and increasing slowly. Constipation occurs with verapamil. Worsening heart failure can be seen with verapamil and diltiazem.

## Cautions/contraindications

The major contraindication is aortic stenosis. Verapamil and diltiazem diminish cardiac contractility and slow cardiac conduction; thus they are relatively contraindicated in patients taking  $\beta$ -blockers, left ventricular failure, sick sinus syndrome, heart failure. Verapamil is contraindicated for treatment of arrhythmias complicating Wolff–Parkinson–White syndrome. Short-acting calcium antagonists increase mortality and are contraindicated immediately after myocardial infarction.

## Potassium-channel activators

### Mechanism of action

The mechanism of action here is a hybrid of nitrates (p. 499) and potassium channel activators. The latter causes an increase in potassium flow into the cell and indirectly leads to calcium-channel blockade and arterial dilatation.

### Indications

Use is indicated in cases of refractory angina in patients who are uncontrolled on standard regimens of aspirin,  $\beta$ -blockers, nitrates, calcium antagonists and statins.

## Preparations and dose

### Nicorandil

Tablets: 10 mg, 20 mg.

- 5–30 mg twice daily.

## Side-effects

These include headache (often temporary), flushing, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, hypotension, tachycardia.

## Cautions/contraindications

Use is contraindicated in left ventricular failure and cardiogenic shock. Sildenafil is contraindicated in patients taking nicorandil.

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# Respiratory disease

## BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

The main function of the lungs is to provide continuous gas exchange between inspired air (supplying oxygen) and blood in the pulmonary circulation (removing carbon dioxide). The lungs are each enclosed within a double membrane; visceral pleura covers the surface of the lung and is continuous at the hilum with the parietal pleura, which lines the inside of the thoracic cavity. The interpleural space between these layers normally contains only a tiny amount of lubricating fluid. The right lung is divided into three lobes, whereas the left lung has two. The trachea divides at the carina (lying under the junction of manubrium sterni and second right costal cartilage) into right and left main bronchi. Within the lungs the bronchi branch again, forming secondary and tertiary bronchi, then smaller bronchioles, and finally terminal bronchioles ending at the alveoli.

The airways are lined by epithelium containing ciliated columnar cells and mucous (goblet) cells – fewer of the latter in the smaller airways. Mucus traps macrophages, inhaled particles and bacteria, and is moved by the cilia in a cephalad direction thus clearing the lungs (the mucociliary escalator). Gas exchange occurs in the alveolus where capillary blood flow and inspired air are separated only by a thin wall composed mainly of type 1 pneumocytes and capillary endothelial cells and the capillary and alveolar basement membranes are fused as one.

## FUNCTION OF THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

The lung has a dual blood supply: pulmonary (venous blood) and systemic (arterial blood). The pulmonary circulation delivers deoxygenated blood to the lungs from the right side of the heart via the pulmonary artery. Oxygen from inhaled air passes through the alveoli into the bloodstream and oxygenated blood is returned to the left heart via the pulmonary veins. The bronchial (systemic) system carries arterial blood from the descending aorta to oxygenate lung tissue primarily along the larger conducting airways. In contrast,

carbon dioxide passes from the capillaries which surround the alveoli, into the alveolar spaces, and is breathed out.

Inspiratory airflow is achieved by creating a sub-atmospheric pressure in the alveoli by increasing the volume of the thoracic cavity under the action of the inspiratory muscles: descent of the diaphragm (innervated by the phrenic nerve, C3–C5) and contraction of the intercostal muscles with movement of the ribs upwards and outwards. The accessory muscles of respiration are also recruited (sternomastoids and scalenes) during exercise or respiratory distress. Expiration is a passive process, relying on the elastic recoil of the lung and chest wall. During exercise ventilation is increased and expiration becomes active, with contraction of the muscles of the abdominal wall and the internal intercostals.

## SYMPTOMS OF RESPIRATORY DISEASE

Common symptoms of respiratory disease are cough, sputum production, chest pain (p. 407), breathlessness, haemoptysis and wheeze.

**Cough** is the most common manifestation of lower respiratory tract disease. It is initiated by mechanical (e.g. touch and displacement) or chemical (e.g. noxious fumes) stimulation of specialized cough receptors on the epithelium of the upper and lower respiratory tract. Impulses are carried by afferent nerves to a 'cough centre' in the medulla. This generates efferent signals (via phrenic nerve and efferent branches of the vagus) to expiratory musculature to generate a cough.

Cough lasting only a few weeks is most commonly due to an acute respiratory tract infection. Asthma, gastro-oesophageal reflux disease and postnasal drip are the most common causes of a persistent cough (Table 11.1). A postnasal drip is due to rhinitis, acute nasopharyngitis or sinusitis and symptoms, other than cough, are nasal discharge, a sensation of liquid dripping back into the throat, and frequent throat clearing. Cough may be the only symptom of asthma when it is typically worse at night, on waking and after

**Table 11.1** Causes of persistent cough

\*Postnasal drip

\*Asthma

\*Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease

Post-viral cough

Lung airway disease: COPD, bronchiectasis, tumour, foreign body

Lung parenchymal disease: interstitial lung disease, lung abscess

Drugs: ACE inhibitors

*\*Commonest causes and responsible for 99% of cases who are non-smokers, not taking ACE inhibitors and with a normal chest X-ray.*

*COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; ACE, angiotensin-converting enzyme*



exercise. A chronic cough, sometimes accompanied by sputum production, is common in smokers. However, a worsening cough may be the presenting symptom of bronchial carcinoma and needs investigation.

**Breathlessness** Dyspnoea is the subjective sensation of shortness of breath. Orthopnoea is breathlessness that occurs when lying flat and is the result of abdominal contents pushing the diaphragm into the thorax and of redistribution of blood from the lower extremities to the lungs. Paroxysmal nocturnal dyspnoea is a manifestation of left heart failure: the patient wakes up gasping for breath and finds some relief by sitting upright. The mechanism is similar to orthopnoea, but because sensory awareness is depressed during sleep, severe interstitial pulmonary oedema can accumulate.

The cause of breathlessness (Table 11.2) is often apparent from the clinical history and examination, particularly with sudden and acute breathlessness. In acute breathlessness, appropriate initial investigations include a chest X-ray, pulse oximetry and sometimes arterial blood gases. ECG, full blood count, serum electrolytes, blood glucose, serum troponin (suspected cardiac cause) and D-dimers (suspected pulmonary embolism) may be indicated depending on the clinical circumstances. Pulmonary embolism can be a difficult diagnosis to make and chest X-ray, blood gases and ECG may be normal (p. 472). Simple lung function tests, pulse oximetry, a full blood count and a chest X-ray are the initial investigations for most patients with chronic breathlessness. Echocardiography is indicated if a cardiac cause is suspected.

**Table 11.2** Causes of breathlessness

| Acute (onset over minutes/hours)                                 | Chronic (onset over days/months) |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Acute asthma   | Asthma                           |
| Exacerbation COPD  | COPD                             |
| Pneumothorax   | Diffuse parenchymal lung disease |
| Pulmonary embolism   | Pleural effusion                 |
| Pneumonia  | Cancer of the bronchus/trachea   |
| Hypersensitivity pneumonitis                                     | Heart failure                    |
| Upper airway obstruction:<br>Inhaled foreign body<br>Anaphylaxis | Severe anaemia                   |
| Left heart failure   |                                  |
| Cardiac tamponade  |                                  |
| Panic with hyperventilation                                      |                                  |
| <i>COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</i>               |                                  |

Psychogenic breathlessness is usually described as 'inability to take a deep breath' and rarely disturbs sleep and may be better with exercise.

**Wheezing** is the result of airflow limitation and due to localized (e.g. cancer, foreign body) or generalized (e.g. asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) obstruction of the airways. Asthma is a common cause of wheezing and is likely when patients present with episodic wheezing, cough and dyspnoea which responds favourably to inhaled bronchodilators. Wheeze should be distinguished from stridor which is a harsh inspiratory wheezing sound caused by obstruction of the trachea or major bronchi, e.g. by tumour.

**Haemoptysis** (coughing blood) always requires investigation. Common causes are bronchiectasis, bronchial carcinoma, pulmonary embolism, bronchitis and lung infections including pneumonia (rust coloured sputum), abscess and tuberculosis. Pulmonary oedema is associated with the production of pink frothy sputum. Rarer causes are benign tumours, bleeding disorders, Wegener's granulomatosis (p. 549) and Goodpasture's syndrome (p. 552). A chest X-ray should be performed in all patients, and subsequent investigations (e.g. bronchoscopy, CT of the thorax, ventilation-perfusion scan) decided from the history and examination.

Massive haemoptysis (>200 mL in 24 hours) is most often due to pulmonary TB, bronchiectasis, lung abscess or malignancy (primary or secondary). It may be life-threatening due to asphyxiation and is an indication for hospital admission. Initial management includes administration of oxygen, placement of a large-bore intravenous catheter, blood samples (full blood count, clotting screen, urea and electrolytes), arterial blood gases and chest X-ray. There should be early referral to a respiratory physician and thoracic surgeon.

**Chest pain** (p. 407) due to respiratory disease is often a localized sharp pain made worse by deep breathing or coughing (referred to as pleuritic pain) and is most commonly caused by infection or by pleural irritation from a pulmonary embolism.

## INVESTIGATION OF RESPIRATORY DISEASE

### Sputum

Sputum is commonly sent for microbiology (Gram stain and culture in pneumonia, auramine stain in suspected tuberculosis) and cytology for malignant cells but may be falsely negative. A 5% saline nebulizer will encourage productive coughing if sputum is difficult to obtain. Yellow/green sputum indicates inflammation (infection or allergy). Haemoptysis is discussed above.

### Respiratory function tests

Respiratory function tests include simple outpatient investigations to assess airflow limitation and lung volumes. Normal values vary for age, sex and height, and between individuals.

## Peak expiratory flow rate (PEFR)

This records the maximum expiratory flow rate during a forced expiration after full inspiration and is measured with a peak flow meter. It is useful in monitoring the response to treatment of asthma and many patients will monitor their own PEFR at home.

## The spirometer

This is used to measure forced expiratory volume (FEV) and forced vital capacity (FVC). The patient exhales as fast and as long as possible from a full inspiration; the volume expired in the first second is the  $FEV_1$  and the total volume expired is the FVC. The  $FEV_1/FVC$  ratio is a measure of airflow limitation and is normally about 75%:

- Airflow limitation:  $FEV_1/FVC < 75\%$
- Restrictive lung disease:  $FEV_1/FVC > 75\%$ .

More sophisticated techniques allow the measurement of total lung capacity (TLC) and residual volume (RV). These are increased in obstructive lung disease such as asthma or COPD, because of air trapping, and reduced in lung fibrosis. Transfer factor ( $T_{CO}$ ) measures the transfer of a low concentration of added carbon monoxide in the inspired air to haemoglobin. The transfer coefficient ( $K_{CO}$ ) is the value corrected for differences in lung volume. Gas transfer is reduced early on in emphysema and lung fibrosis.

**Arterial blood gas sampling** This is used to measure partial pressures of oxygen and carbon dioxide within arterial blood (p. 583), the values of which are used in the assessment of the breathless patient and the management of respiratory failure and acute asthma. Arterial oxygen saturation ( $S_aO_2$ ) can be continuously measured non-invasively using an oximeter with either ear or finger probes. Normal ranges are from 94 to 98%. However, carbon dioxide levels are not measured and hypoventilation with carbon dioxide retention would go undetected.

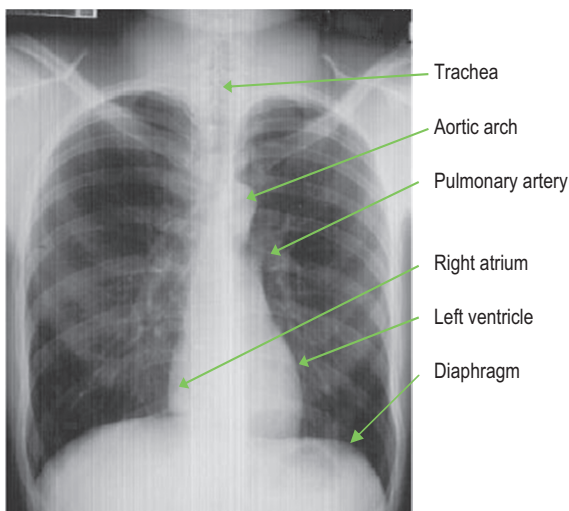
## Walking distance

A 6-minute period is also used to assess lung function.

## Imaging

### Chest X-ray

Routine films are taken postero-anteriorly (PA), i.e. the film is placed in front of the patient with the X-ray source behind. AP films are taken only in patients who are unable to stand; the cardiac outline appears bigger and the scapulae cannot be moved out of the way. Figure 11.1 shows a normal chest X-ray and suggests a systematic approach to read a film. The solitary pulmonary nodule detected on chest X-ray is a common clinical problem (Table 11.3). Risk factors for malignancy in this situation are older age, smoker, occupational exposure to carcinogens, increasing size of lesion (80% > 3 cm), irregular border, eccentric calcification of the lesion and increasing size



**Fig. 11.1** A normal chest X-ray and suggested checklist for review of a film.

#### Check list

Patient name and date of film

View – ?PA or AP

Film centring – ?equal distance between each clavicular head and spinal processes

Trachea – ?deviated from midline

Soft tissues: neck, shoulders, breast

Bony outline: ribs, clavicles, spine

Diaphragms – right diaphragm usually 2–3 cm higher than left

Cardiothoracic ratio – maximum transverse diameter of the heart normally less than 50% maximum transverse diameter of the thorax measured from inside of ribs on PA film

Mediastinum – ?widened (>6 cm on upright film or >25% of thoracic width at aortic knob)

Hilar region – ? lymphadenopathy, ?enlarged pulmonary arteries and veins

Lungs – ?opacities, consolidation, fluid, nodules.

compared to an old X-ray. CT scan is usually necessary for further evaluation.

### Computed tomography (CT scan, p. 822)

The initial imaging tool for the lung parenchyma is the chest X-ray. However, a CT scan can detect lung disease in symptomatic patients with a normal chest X-ray. It can be used as a guide to the type and site of lung or pleural biopsy, and is used in the staging of bronchial carcinoma. Multi-slice (high resolution) CT scanning (sampling lung parenchyma with scans of 1–2 mm

**Table 11.3** Causes of a solitary pulmonary nodule

| Benign  | Malignant           |
|---|---------------------|
| Infectious granuloma, e.g. tuberculosis                           | Bronchial carcinoma |
| Other infections, e.g. localized pneumonia, abscess, hydatid cyst | Single metastasis   |
| Benign neoplasms  | Lymphoma            |
| Arteriovenous malformation  | Pulmonary carcinoid |
| Bronchogenic cyst   |                     |
| Pulmonary infarct   |                     |
| Inflammatory, rheumatoid nodule, Wegener's granuloma              |                     |

thickness at intervals of 10–20 mm) is particularly useful in the detection and evaluation of diffuse parenchymal lung disease and in diagnosis of bronchiectasis. CT angiography (helical CT using intravenous contrast) is used in the diagnosis of pulmonary emboli.

### Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI, p. 826)

MRI is used in the staging of lung cancer to assess tumour invasion in the mediastinum, lung apex and chest wall. It also provides accurate images of the heart and aorta. MRI is less useful than CT scanning in the assessment of the lung parenchyma.

### Positron emission tomography (PET, p. 828)

PET scanning is used in the investigation of pulmonary nodules to differentiate benign from malignant, and in the staging of lung cancer.

### Scintigraphic imaging

Ventilation–perfusion ( $\dot{V}/\dot{Q}$ ) scanning is used in the diagnosis of pulmonary emboli. Xenon-133 gas is inhaled (the ventilation scan) and microaggregates of albumin labelled with technetium-99m are injected intravenously (the perfusion scan). Pulmonary emboli are detected as ‘cold areas’ on the perfusion scan relative to the ventilation scan. However, many lung diseases affect pulmonary blood flow as well as ventilation and the  $\dot{V}/\dot{Q}$  scan is only diagnostic when it is reported as normal (excluding PE) or high probability (diagnostic of pulmonary emboli).

### Pleural aspiration and biopsy

Pleural aspiration is used for both diagnostic and therapeutic reasons (to drain large effusions for symptom relief, to instil therapeutic agents such as sclerosants). A diagnostic fluid sample is obtained with a fine bore needle and a 50 mL syringe to investigate the cause of a pleural effusion (p. 559).

Complications of pleural aspiration include pneumothorax, damage to the neurovascular bundle which lies in the subcostal groove, infection and seeding of malignant cells along the tract with a malignant effusion. Pulmonary oedema may occur when large quantities of fluid (>1 L) are removed rapidly for therapeutic purposes.

## Bronchoscopy

A flexible bronchoscope is passed through the nose and the airways as far as the subsegmental bronchi are inspected under intravenous midazolam sedation, topical lidocaine anaesthesia and pre-medication with an antimuscarinic agent such as atropine (to reduce bronchial secretions). Biopsies and brushings are taken of macroscopic abnormalities and washings for appropriate microbiological staining and culture and cytological examination for malignant cells. Diffuse parenchymal lung disease is investigated by trans-bronchial biopsy. Complications of bronchoscopy ± biopsy include respiratory depression, pneumothorax, respiratory obstruction, cardiac arrhythmias and haemorrhage.

## Mediastinoscopy

A mediastinoscopy is used in the diagnosis of mediastinal masses and in staging nodal disease in carcinoma of the bronchus. An incision is made just above the sternum and a mediastinoscope inserted by blunt dissection.

## Video-assisted thoracoscopic (VATS) lung biopsy

This technique is less invasive than open thoracotomy for obtaining a lung biopsy. It is used in the investigation of diffuse and localized lung disease.

## SMOKING

Cigarette smoking has declined in recent years in the Western world, but is on the increase in many developing countries. Tobacco smoke contains over 40 different carcinogens and is associated with an increased risk of cancer in the gastrointestinal tract (oral cavity, oesophagus, stomach and pancreas), respiratory (larynx and bronchus) and urogenital system (bladder, kidney, cervix). Cigarette smoking is a risk factor for ischaemic heart disease and peripheral vascular disease and is the major cause of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) (p. 516). Environmental tobacco smoke ('passive' smoking) also increases the risk of lung cancer and COPD. Persuading an individual to stop smoking is an essential part of the management of many respiratory diseases and has a preventative role in the 'well' person. Population targeted approaches such as advertising and banning smoking in public places has reduced smoking prevalence. Individually targeted smoking cessation strategies are best delivered by a smoking cessation clinic and are

non-pharmacological (behavioural therapy, self-help programmes, group counselling) and pharmacological:

- Nicotine replacement therapy as gum, lozenges, patches, tablets, nasal spray
- Bupropion tablets – mode of action in smoking cessation is not clear
- Varenicline tablets – partial agonist at the nicotinic acid acetylcholine receptor.

The pharmacological therapies all require the smoker to commit to a target stop date.

## DISEASES OF THE UPPER RESPIRATORY TRACT

### The common cold (acute coryza)

The common cold is usually caused by infection with one of the rhinoviruses. Spread is by droplets and close personal contact. After an incubation period of 12 hours to 5 days there is malaise, slight pyrexia, a sore throat and a watery nasal discharge, which becomes mucopurulent after a few days. Treatment is symptomatic. The differential diagnosis is mainly from rhinitis (see below).

### Sinusitis (see p. 707)

### Rhinitis

Rhinitis is defined clinically as sneezing attacks, nasal discharge or blockage occurring for more than 1 hour on most days:

- For a limited period of the year (*seasonal or intermittent rhinitis*)
- Throughout the whole year (*perennial or persistent rhinitis*).

**Seasonal rhinitis** is often called ‘hay fever’ and occurs during the summer months. It is caused by allergy to grass and tree pollen and a variety of mould spores (e.g. *Aspergillus fumigatus*) which grow on cultivated plants. In addition to the nasal symptoms there may be itching of the eyes and soft palate.

**Perennial rhinitis** may be allergic (the allergens are similar to those for asthma) or non-allergic (triggered by cold air, smoke and perfume). Patients rarely have symptoms affecting the eyes or soft palate. Some develop nasal polyps which may cause nasal obstruction, loss of smell and taste, and mouth breathing.

### Diagnosis

The diagnosis of rhinitis is clinical. Skin-prick testing or measurement of specific serum IgE antibody against the particular antigen (RAST test) in conjunction with a detailed clinical history will identify causal antigens.

## Management

This involves avoidance of allergens, if practical, antihistamines, e.g. cetirizine or loratidine tablets, decongestants and topical steroids, e.g. beclometasone spray twice daily. A 2-week course of low-dose oral prednisolone (5–10 mg daily) is used when other treatments fail.

### Acute pharyngitis

Viruses, particularly from the adenovirus group, are the most common cause of acute pharyngitis. Symptoms are a sore throat and fever which are self-limiting and only require symptomatic treatment. More persistent and severe pharyngitis may imply bacterial infection, often secondary invaders, of which the most common organisms are haemolytic *Streptococcus*, *Haemophilus influenzae* and *Staphylococcus aureus*. This is treated with penicillin V 500 mg four times a day for 10 days (erythromycin if allergic).

### Acute laryngotracheobronchitis (croup)

This is usually the result of infection with one of the parainfluenza viruses or measles virus. Symptoms are most severe in children under 3 years of age. Inflammatory oedema involving the larynx causes a hoarse voice, barking cough (croup) and stridor (p. 508). Tracheitis produces a burning retrosternal pain. Treatment is with oxygen therapy, oral or intramuscular corticosteroids and nebulized adrenaline. Endotracheal intubation is occasionally necessary and rarely tracheostomy.

### Influenza

The influenza virus exists in two main forms, A and B. The surface of the virion is coated with haemagglutinin (H) and an enzyme, neuraminidase (N), which are necessary for attachment to the host respiratory epithelium. Human immunity develops against the H and N antigens. Influenza A has the capacity to undergo antigenic 'shift', and major changes in the H and N antigens are associated with pandemic infections which may cause millions of deaths world-wide. The H5N1 strain is passed from birds to humans (avian flu) and the H1N1 strain is endemic in pigs and birds. A new strain of swine-origin H1N1 is responsible for the latest pandemic, declared June 2009. Minor antigenic 'drifts' are associated with less severe epidemics.

### Clinical features

The incubation period is 1–3 days. There is then an abrupt onset of fever, generalized aching in the limbs, severe headache, sore throat and dry cough, all of which may last several weeks. Influenza and the common cold (p. 513) can have similar symptoms. In general flu symptoms are worse than a



common cold, fever, generalized aching and dry cough are more common with flu, and a runny and stuffy nose are more common with a cold.

## Diagnosis

Laboratory diagnosis is not always necessary, but serology shows a fourfold rise in antibody titre over a 2-week period, or the virus can be demonstrated in throat or nasal secretion.

## Management

Treatment is symptomatic (paracetamol, bed rest, maintenance of fluid intake), together with antibiotics to prevent secondary infection for individuals with chronic bronchitis, heart or renal disease. In the current pandemic (H1N1), neuraminidase inhibitors, e.g. zanamivir and oseltamivir, are offered to all patients with suspicious symptoms without the need for testing for infection.

## Complications

Pneumonia is the most common complication. This is either viral or the result of secondary infection with bacteria, of which *Staphylococcus aureus* is the most serious, with a mortality rate of up to 20%.

## Prophylaxis

Influenza vaccine is prepared from current strains. It is effective in 70% of people and lasts for about a year. It is recommended in individuals over 65 years of age or people under 65 years of age who are more likely to acquire the infection or suffer from a severe illness (see *National Formulary* for a detailed list).

## Inhalation of foreign bodies

Children inhale foreign bodies – frequently peanuts – more often than do adults. In adults inhalation is usually associated with a depressed conscious level, such as after an alcoholic binge. A large object may totally occlude the airways and rapidly result in death. Smaller objects impact more peripherally (usually in the right main bronchus, because it is more vertical than the left) and cause choking or persistent wheeze, presentation at a later stage with persistent suppurative pneumonia or lung abscess. In an emergency the foreign body is dislodged from the airway using the Heimlich manoeuvre: the subject is gripped from behind with the arms around the upper abdomen, a sharp forceful squeeze pushes the diaphragm into the thorax and the rapid airflow generated may be sufficient to force the foreign body out of the trachea or bronchus. In the non-emergency situation bronchoscopy is used to remove the foreign body.

## DISEASES OF THE LOWER RESPIRATORY TRACT

### Acute bronchitis

Acute bronchitis is usually viral but may be complicated by bacterial infection, particularly in smokers and in patients with chronic airflow limitation. Symptoms are cough, retrosternal discomfort, chest tightness and wheezing, which usually resolve spontaneously over 4–8 days.

### Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

COPD is characterized by poorly reversible airflow limitation that is usually progressive and associated with a persistent inflammatory response of the lungs. COPD is now the preferred term for patients previously diagnosed as having chronic bronchitis or emphysema.

#### Epidemiology and aetiology

Cigarette smoking is the major cause of COPD and is related to the daily average of cigarettes smoked and years spent smoking. Most smokers will eventually develop abnormal lung function if they continue to smoke. Chronic exposure to pollutants at work (mining, building and chemical industries), outdoor air pollution, and inhalation of smoke from biomass fuels used in heating and cooking in poorly ventilated areas play a role, particularly in developing countries. Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency (p. 174) causes early onset COPD but otherwise patients are rarely symptomatic before middle age. The cost of COPD is considerable due to direct (hospital admissions, outpatient visits, drug costs) and indirect costs (loss of working days).

#### Pathophysiology

In chronic bronchitis, there is airway narrowing, and hence airflow limitation, as a result of hypertrophy and hyperplasia of mucus secreting glands of the bronchial tree, bronchial wall inflammation and mucosal oedema. The epithelial cell layer may ulcerate and, when the ulcers heal, squamous epithelium may replace columnar epithelium (squamous metaplasia). Emphysema is defined pathologically as dilatation and destruction of the lung tissue distal to the terminal bronchioles. Emphysematous changes lead to loss of elastic recoil, which normally keeps airways open during expiration; this is associated with expiratory airflow limitation and air trapping. Although it has been suggested that these definitions separate patients into two different clinical groups (the 'pink puffers' with predominant emphysema and the 'blue bloaters' with predominant chronic bronchitis), most have both emphysema and chronic bronchitis, irrespective of the clinical signs.

## Pathogenesis

- *Cigarette smoke* causes mucous gland hypertrophy in the larger airways and leads to an increase in neutrophils, macrophages and lymphocytes in the airways and walls of the bronchi and bronchioles. These cells release inflammatory mediators (elastases, proteases, IL-1 and -8 and TNF- $\alpha$ ) that attract inflammatory cells (and further amplify the process), induce structural changes and break down connective tissue (protease-antiprotease imbalance) in the lung parenchyma resulting in emphysema.  $\alpha_1$ -Antitrypsin is a major protease inhibitor and is inactivated by cigarette smoke.
- *Respiratory infections* are a precipitating cause of acute exacerbations of COPD, but it is not known if they contribute to the progressive airflow limitation that characterizes COPD.
- *$\alpha_1$ -Antitrypsin deficiency* (p. 174) is a cause of early-onset emphysema.

## Clinical features

Symptoms and signs help to distinguish COPD from asthma (Table 11.4). The characteristic symptoms of COPD are cough with the production of sputum, wheeze and breathlessness following many years of a smoker's cough. Frequent infective exacerbations occur, giving purulent sputum. On examination the patient with severe disease is breathless at rest, with prolonged expiration, chest expansion is poor and the lungs are hyperinflated (loss of

**Table 11.4** Differentiating features of COPD and asthma

|   | COPD                                   | Asthma                    |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| Smoker or ex-smoker                                       | Most                                   | Possibly                  |
| Symptoms under age 35                                     | Rare                                   | Common                    |
| Atopic features (rhinitis, eczema)                        | Uncommon                               | Common                    |
| Cellular infiltrate                                       | Macrophages, neutrophils, CD8+ T cells | Eosinophils, CD4+ T cells |
| Cough and sputum  | Daily/common                           | Intermittent              |
| Breathlessness  | Persistent and progressive             | Variable                  |
| Night-time symptoms                                       | Uncommon                               | Common                    |
| Significant diurnal or day-to-day variability of symptoms | Uncommon                               | Common                    |
| Bronchodilator response (FEV <sub>1</sub> & PEFR)         | <15%                                   | >20%                      |
| Corticosteroid response                                   | Poor                                   | Good                      |

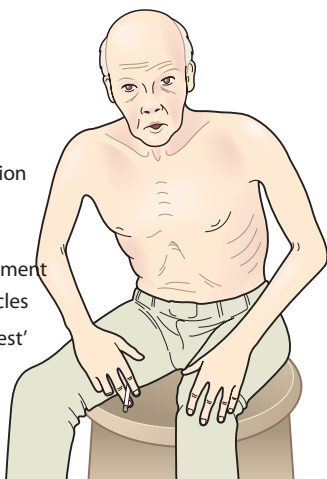
Thin with loss of muscle mass

Pursed-lip breathing

Increased work of breathing:

- leaning forward
- accessory muscles of respiration
- tracheal tug
- nasal flare
- paradoxical abdominal movement
- indrawing of intercostal muscles

Hyperinflated chest – ‘barrel chest’



**Fig. 11.2** Some clinical signs in a patient with COPD.

normal cardiac and liver dullness, ‘barrel-shaped chest, protruding abdomen). Pursed lips on expiration help to prevent alveolar and airway collapse. Use of the accessory muscles of respiration (scalene and sternocleidomastoid) reflect the increased work of breathing (Fig. 11.2). There may be a wheeze or quiet breath sounds. In ‘pink puffers’ breathlessness is the predominant problem; they are not cyanosed. ‘Blue bloaters’ hypoventilate; they are cyanosed, may be oedematous and have features of  $\text{CO}_2$  retention (warm peripheries with a bounding pulse, flapping tremor of the outstretched hands and confusion in severe cases).

In addition to pulmonary manifestations, patients with COPD develop systemic problems, including skeletal muscle dysfunction (loss of muscle bulk and skeletal muscle strength), nutritional abnormalities, weight loss, and depression. Skeletal muscle dysfunction is due to a combination of factors (aging, malnutrition, systemic inflammation, inactivity, hypoxia) and affects both respiratory and limb muscles. It contributes to reduced exercise tolerance independently of the reduced lung function.

## Complications

- Respiratory failure (p. 582)
- Cor pulmonale, i.e. heart disease secondary to disease of the lung (p. 471).

## Investigations

The diagnosis is made on the basis of history (breathlessness and sputum production in a lifetime smoker), physical examination and confirmation of airflow limitation with lung function testing:

- *Lung function tests* show progressive airflow limitation with increasing disease severity and breathlessness (Table 11.5). Some patients have partially reversible airflow limitation with an increase in FEV<sub>1</sub> (but usually < 15%) following inhalation of a β<sub>2</sub>-agonist. Serial peak flow measurements may be necessary to exclude asthma (Table 11.4). Additional testing of lung function is necessary if there is diagnostic uncertainty. Lung volumes are normal or increased, and the loss of alveoli with emphysema results in a decreased gas transfer coefficient of carbon monoxide.
- *Chest X-ray* may be normal or show evidence of hyperinflated lungs indicated by low, flattened diaphragms and a long narrow heart shadow. There are reduced peripheral lung markings and bullae (complete destruction of lung tissue producing an airspace greater than 1 cm).
- *High resolution CT scans* are used, particularly to show emphysematous bullae.
- *Haemoglobin and PCV* may be high as a result of persistent hypoxaemia and secondary polycythaemia (p. 217).
- *Arterial blood gases* may be normal or show hypoxia ± hypercapnia in advanced cases.

**Table 11.5** Classification of severity (GOLD criteria)

| Stage of COPD         | Function  | Symptoms  |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Stage I, Mild         | FEV <sub>1</sub> /FVC < 70%<br>FEV <sub>1</sub> ≥ 80% predicted   | Chronic cough, none/<br>mild breathlessness                             |
| Stage II, Moderate    | FEV <sub>1</sub> /FVC < 70%<br>50% ≤ FEV <sub>1</sub> < 80%<br>predicted  | Breathlessness on<br>exertion   |
| Stage III, Severe     | FEV <sub>1</sub> /FVC < 70%<br>30% ≤ FEV <sub>1</sub> < 50%<br>predicted  | Breathless on minimal<br>exertion. May be weight<br>loss and depression |
| Stage IV, Very severe | FEV <sub>1</sub> /FVC < 70%<br>FEV <sub>1</sub> < 30% predicted <i>or</i><br>FEV <sub>1</sub> < 50% predicted plus<br>respiratory failure | Breathless at rest  |

(Modified from the Global Strategy for the Diagnosis, Management and Prevention of COPD, [www.goldcopd.com](http://www.goldcopd.com))

- $\alpha_1$ -Antitrypsin serum levels and genotype are measured in early onset disease (<40 years) or family history.
- ECG and echocardiography is used to assess cardiac status if clinical features of cor pulmonale (p. 471).

## Management

COPD care should be delivered by a multidisciplinary team to include GP and respiratory physicians, respiratory nurse specialists, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, dietetics and palliative care in end-stage COPD.

**Cessation of smoking** It is essential to persuade the patient to stop smoking (p. 520). This may slow the rate of deterioration.

**Bronchodilators** A stepwise approach to drug therapy is used similar to that used in asthma (p. 526). Inhaled (with spacer device if necessary) tiotropium bromide, a long-acting once-daily antimuscarinic agent, is used as initial maintenance therapy with a rescue short-acting  $\beta_2$ -agonist (p. 564) to prevent or reduce acute symptoms. A long-acting  $\beta_2$ -agonist is added in patients with persistent dyspnoea. Dry powder inhalers are simpler to use than metered dose inhalers but technique still needs to be checked. Nebulized therapy may be useful for patients with disabling breathlessness despite inhalers.

**Corticosteroids** Assessment of reversibility is made with a 2-week course of oral prednisolone (30 mg daily), with measurement of lung function before and after the treatment period. If there is objective evidence of benefit (>15% improvement in FEV<sub>1</sub>), oral steroids are gradually reduced and replaced with inhaled corticosteroids.

**Prevention of infection** Acute exacerbations of COPD are commonly due to bacterial or viral infection. Patients should receive pneumococcal vaccine and annual influenza vaccination and receive prompt antibiotic treatment for acute exacerbations.

**Oxygen** Long-term domiciliary oxygen therapy is provided by oxygen concentrators and has a survival benefit in selected groups of patients:

- $P_{aO_2} < 7.3$  kPa when breathing room air
- $P_{aO_2} < 8.0$  kPa with secondary polycythaemia, nocturnal hypoxaemia, peripheral oedema or evidence of pulmonary hypertension.

Assessment for home oxygen should include blood gas measurements made 3 weeks apart in a stable patient receiving bronchodilator treatment. It is prescribed to patients who no longer smoke (supported by a carboxyhaemoglobin concentration < 3%). Oxygen is given for 19 hours per day (every day) at a flow rate of 1–3 L/min via nasal prongs to increase arterial oxygen saturation to >90%.

**Additional treatments** include mucolytics to reduce sputum viscosity, venesection for polycythaemia, diuretics for oedema, exercise training to improve sense of well-being and breathlessness, and high-calorie dietary

supplements in those with low BMI. Surgery is beneficial for a minority of patients: bullectomy for patients with large emphysematous bullae and lung volume reduction surgery for selected patients with severe COPD ( $FEV_1 < 1$  L).

## Acute exacerbation of COPD

Diagnosis is made on the basis of increased breathlessness or an increase in sputum volume or purulence. The major complication is respiratory failure. Exacerbations are usually the result of a superimposed viral or bacterial respiratory tract infection and are investigated and treated in a similar manner to asthma but with some essential modifications (see below) (p. 533). Some patients with mild exacerbations may be managed at home by a dedicated multidisciplinary team (including nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists). Management of patients admitted to hospital:

- Controlled oxygen is given with the aim of maintaining  $S_aO_2 > 88$ –92% and  $P_aO_2 > 8$  kPa without increasing  $P_aCO_2$ . These patients often depend on a degree of hypoxaemia to maintain respiratory drive and therefore, if oxygen is necessary, low concentrations (24%) are given via a Venturi mask (fixed oxygen concentration mask), so as not to reduce respiratory drive and precipitate worsening hypercapnia and respiratory acidosis. The oxygen concentration is increased in increments (28% and then 35%) if clinical examination and arterial blood gases (repeated at 30–60 minute intervals) do not show hypoventilation, carbon dioxide retention and worsening acidosis.
- Bronchodilators (salbutamol and ipratropium bromide) are given 4–6 hourly together with oral prednisolone 40 mg. In the presence of type 2 respiratory failure, nebulizers should be air driven and controlled oxygen given by nasal cannulae simultaneously.
- Antibiotics, e.g. cefaclor or co-amoxiclav, are given if there is a history of more purulent sputum production or with chest X-ray changes. Patients should be encouraged to cough up sputum, initially with the help of a physiotherapist. Antibiotic treatment is modified depending on sputum culture results.
- Aminophylline use is controversial because of its modest benefits and high incidence of side-effects. It is used for patients with moderate to severe exacerbations who are not responding to standard treatment as above. It is given intravenously with cardiac monitoring as a loading dose (5 mg/kg over 20 minutes) and then maintenance of 0.5 mg/kg/hour. Plasma theophylline levels are measured daily to maintain concentration of 10–20 mg/L (55–110  $\mu$ mol/L). In patients already taking oral theophylline omit the loading dose and check plasma levels before starting the maintenance infusion.
- Patients with life-threatening respiratory failure require ventilatory assistance. Bilevel positive airway pressure (BiPAP, p. 584) avoids the need for

intubation and mechanical ventilation in some patients. It is indicated in patients with signs of worsening respiratory distress (respiratory rate  $> 30/\text{min}$ ) and respiratory acidosis (blood pH  $\leq 7.35$ ,  $P_a\text{CO}_2 > 6 \text{ kPa}$ ) who have failed to respond to optimal medical treatment and controlled oxygen.

- Low molecular weight heparin is given to prevent thromboembolism.
- Respiratory stimulants are rarely used due to the increasing availability of non-invasive ventilatory support. Doxapram, 1.5–4.0 mg/min by slow i.v. infusion, may help in the short term to arouse the patient and to stimulate coughing, with clearance of some secretions.
- Exacerbations of COPD are occasionally the result of pneumothorax, heart failure or pulmonary embolism, and these must be excluded.

### Long term prognosis

This is assessed by the BODE predictive index (body mass index, degree of airflow obstruction – FEV<sub>1</sub>, dyspnoea, exercise capacity). In the most severe category, a patient with BMI  $< 21$ , FEV<sub>1</sub>  $< 35\%$  predicted, shortness of breath on dressing, and walking distance  $< 149 \text{ m}$  in 6 minutes has a mortality rate of 80% at 4 years.

## Obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA)

There is repeated apnoea (cessation of breathing for 10 seconds or more) as a result of obstruction of the upper airway during sleep. It affects about 2% of the population and is most common in overweight middle-aged men. It can also occur in children, particularly those with enlarged tonsils.

### Aetiology

Apnoea occurs if the upper airway at the back of the throat is sucked closed when the patient breathes in. This occurs during sleep because the muscles that hold the airway open are hypotonic. Airway closure continues until the patient is woken up by the struggle to breathe against a blocked throat. These awakenings are so brief that the patient remains unaware of them but may be woken hundreds of times at night leading to sleep deprivation and daytime sleepiness. Contributing factors include alcohol ingestion before sleep, obesity and COPD. It is more common in patients with hypothyroidism and acromegaly.

### Clinical features

Loud snoring and excessive daytime sleepiness (leading to impairment of work performance and driving) occur in the majority of patients. Apnoeas may be witnessed by bed partners. Other symptoms are irritability, personality change, morning headaches, impotence and nocturnal choking. Patients



with OSA have an increased risk of hypertension, heart failure, myocardial infarction and stroke.

## Diagnosis

The Epworth sleepiness scale is a simple tool that helps discriminate OSA from simple snoring. The patient is asked how likely, or not, they would be to fall asleep in eight specified situations – watching television, and sitting and talking to someone are two examples. A high score equates with significant excess sleepiness. Frequent falls in arterial oxygen saturation during sleep (measured by oximetry at home) may confirm the diagnosis. If this is normal or equivocal inpatient sleep studies are indicated. This usually involves oximetry supplemented by video-recording in a room specifically adapted for sleep studies. The diagnosis of sleep apnoea/hypopnoea is confirmed if there are more than 15 apnoeas or hypopnoeas in any 1 hour of sleep.

## Management

- Weight loss, removal of markedly enlarged tonsils and correction of facial deformities may help.
- CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure, p. 584) to the airway via a tight-fitting nasal mask – nasal CPAP – during sleep keeps the pharyngeal walls open and is an effective treatment.

## Bronchiectasis

Bronchiectasis is abnormal and permanent dilatation of the central and medium-sized airways. This in turn leads to impaired clearance of bronchial secretions with secondary bacterial infection and bronchial inflammation. It may be localized to a lobe or generalized throughout the bronchial tree.

## Aetiology

Cystic fibrosis and post-infectious (bronchial damage following pneumonia, whooping cough, TB) are the common causes. Many cases are idiopathic. Rarer causes are immunodeficiency (AIDS and immunoglobulin deficiency), congenital ciliary defect (e.g. Kartagener's syndrome: immotile cilia, situs invertus, chronic sinusitis) and airway obstruction (e.g. inhaled foreign body).

## Clinical features

There is usually a history of a chronic productive cough and recurrent chest infections. In severe disease there is production of copious amounts of thick, foul-smelling green sputum. Other symptoms are haemoptysis (which may be massive and life-threatening), breathlessness and wheeze. On

examination there is clubbing and coarse crackles over the affected area, usually the lung bases.

## Investigations

- Chest X-ray may be normal or show dilated bronchi with thickened bronchial walls, and sometimes multiple cysts containing fluid.
- High-resolution CT scanning (p. 510) is the gold standard for diagnosis. It shows airway dilatation, bronchial wall thickening and bronchial wall cysts that are not shown on a standard chest X-ray.
- Sputum culture is essential during an infective exacerbation. The common organisms are *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Haemophilus influenzae*.
- Further investigations, e.g. serum immunoglobulins, sweat test (p. 525), in patients where an underlying cause is suspected.

## Management

Patients should be advised on smoking cessation (p. 512) and physiotherapy techniques to improve sputum clearance. They should receive annual influenza vaccination, pneumococcal vaccination and prompt antibiotic treatment for exacerbations:

- Respiratory physiotherapy promotes mucociliary clearance and sputum production. Techniques are the active cycle of breathing technique (ACBT), postural drainage and chest percussion.
- Antibiotics are given to patients presenting with increased cough, sputum production or purulence. In mild cases intermittent chemotherapy with cefaclor 500 mg three times daily may be the only therapy needed. Flucloxacillin is the best treatment if *Staph. aureus* is isolated on sputum culture. If the sputum remains yellow or green despite regular physiotherapy and antibiotics it is probable that there is infection with *P. aeruginosa*. Specific antibiotics, e.g. ceftazidime, are required and are administered by aerosol or parenterally. Oral ciprofloxacin is an alternative. Long-term antibiotics are given to patients with frequent exacerbations.
- Bronchodilators ( $\beta_2$  agonists and/or anticholinergics) may provide symptomatic relief even without an objective improvement in FEV<sub>1</sub>.
- Inhaled or oral steroids can decrease the rate of progression.
- Surgery is reserved for the very small minority with localized disease. Severe disease sometimes requires lung or heart–lung transplantation.

## Complications

These are listed in Table 11.6.

**Table 11.6** Complications of bronchiectasis

|                              |
|------------------------------|
| Haemoptysis – may be massive |
| Pneumonia                    |
| Empyema                      |
| Metastatic cerebral abscess  |
| Pneumothorax                 |
| Respiratory failure          |

## Cystic fibrosis

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is an autosomal recessive condition occurring in 1 : 2000 live births in the UK. It is much less common in Afro-Caribbean and Asian people. It is caused by mutations in a single gene on chromosome 7 that encodes the CF transmembrane conductance regulator (CFTR) protein, a chloride channel and regulatory protein found in epithelial cell membranes in the lungs, pancreas, gastrointestinal and reproductive tract. The most common mutation is  $\Delta F_{508}$  (deletion, phenylalanine at position 508). Deranged transport of chloride and/or other CFTR-affected ions, such as sodium and bicarbonate, leads to an alteration in the viscosity and tenacity of mucus produced at these epithelial surfaces and to increased salt content in sweat gland secretions.

### Clinical features

Although the lungs of babies born with CF are structurally normal at birth, frequent respiratory infections soon develop and are the presenting feature. The resultant inflammatory response damages the airway, leading to progressive bronchiectasis, airflow limitation and eventually respiratory failure. Finger clubbing is present in most patients particularly with more advanced disease. Sinusitis and nasal polyps occur in most patients. In the newborn, thick tenacious intestinal secretions cause small bowel obstruction (meconium ileus), an early manifestation of CF. Meconium ileus equivalent syndrome presents in later life with small bowel obstruction. There may be steatorrhoea and diabetes mellitus as a result of pancreatic insufficiency. Males are infertile because of failure of development of the vas deferens. Chronic ill-health in children leads to impaired growth and delayed puberty. Many patients are undernourished.

### Investigations

Evaluation for CF is indicated in patients with suggestive symptoms or signs, or a sibling with the disease:

- Sweat sodium measurement is the initial investigation. This must be performed in a laboratory regularly undertaking testing. A value  $\geq$

60 mmol/L is diagnostic. Lower values but above the normal range still require DNA analysis

- Blood DNA analysis of the gene defect
- Radiology showing features of CF.

Genetic screening for the carrier state together with counselling should be offered to persons or couples with a family history of CF.

## Management

Management of bronchiectasis and exocrine pancreatic insufficiency is described on pages 190 and 524. Lung damage associated with persistent infection with *P. aeruginosa* is a major cause of morbidity and mortality in patients with CF. Nebulized anti-pseudomonal antibiotic therapy, e.g. tobramycin, improves lung function, slows the rate of respiratory decline and decreases the risk of infective exacerbations and hospitalization in these patients. Regular sputum culture for *Pseudomonas* allows early detection and treatment. Inhalation of recombinant DNAase (donase alfa) improves FEV<sub>1</sub>. Some patients with severe respiratory disease have received lung or heart–lung transplantations.

## Prognosis

Ninety per cent of children now survive into their teens and the median survival for those born after 1990 is about 40 years. Most mortality is the result of pulmonary disease. A major problem is sputum infection with *Burkholderia cepacia*. It is associated with accelerated lung disease and resistance to antibiotics in some strains. Close contact promotes cross-infection, so siblings and fellow sufferers with CF may pass the organism from one to another.

## ASTHMA

Asthma is a common chronic inflammatory condition of the lung airways the cause of which is incompletely understood. It has three characteristics: airflow limitation, airway hyperresponsiveness to a range of stimuli, and inflammation of the bronchi. Airflow limitation is usually reversible, either spontaneously or with treatment; in chronic asthma it may be irreversible as a result of airway wall remodeling and mucus impaction.

## Epidemiology

The prevalence of asthma is increasing, particularly in the second decade of life, when 10–15% of the population is affected. Asthma is more common in developed countries (particularly the UK, Australia and New Zealand) than Far Eastern countries and Eastern Europe.

## Classification

Asthma is classified as:

- *Extrinsic* (atopic) – allergens can be identified by positive skin-prick reactions to common inhaled allergens, e.g, dust mite, pollens and fungi. In adults sensitization to chemicals or biological products in the workplace may be the cause.
- *Intrinsic* often starts in middle age and no definite external cause can be identified. However, many patients do show a degree of atopy and on close questioning give a history of respiratory symptoms consistent with childhood asthma.

## Aetiology

Two major factors are involved in the development of asthma:

- *Atopy* is the term used in individuals who readily develop immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies against common environmental antigens such as the house-dust mite, grass pollen and fungal spores from *Aspergillus fumigatus*. Genetic and environmental factors affect serum IgE levels. Included in the genetic influence is the interleukin-4 (IL-4) gene cluster on chromosome 5 which controls the production of the cytokines, IL-3, IL-4, IL-5 and IL-13 which in turn affect mast and eosinophil cell development and longevity, and IgE production. Environmental factors include childhood exposure to allergens and maternal smoking, and intestinal bacterial and childhood infections. Growing up in a relatively clean environment may predispose towards an IgE response to allergens.
- *Increased responsiveness of the airways of the lung* to stimuli such as inhaled histamine and methacholine (bronchial provocation tests, see below).

## Pathogenesis

The primary abnormality in asthma is narrowing of the airway, which is due to smooth muscle contraction, thickening of the airway wall by cellular infiltration and inflammation, and the presence of secretions within the airway lumen. The pathogenesis of asthma is complex and not fully understood. It involves a number of cells, mediators, nerves and vascular leakage which can be activated by several mechanisms, of which exposure to allergens is the most relevant.

**Inflammation** Mast cells, eosinophils, T lymphocytes and dendritic cells are increased in the bronchial wall, mucous membranes and secretions of asthmatics. Dendritic cells may play a role in the initial uptake and presentation of allergens to lymphocytes, predominantly of the T-helper 2 (Th2) phenotype. These lymphocytes, when stimulated by the appropriate antigen,

release a restricted panel of cytokines (IL-3, IL-4, IL-5, IL-9 and IL-13, GM-CSF), which play a part in the migration and activation of mast cells and eosinophils. In addition, production of IL-4 and IL-13 helps maintain the proallergic Th2 phenotype, favouring switching of antibody production by B lymphocytes to IgE. These IgE molecules attach to mast cells via high-affinity receptors which in turn release a number of powerful mediators acting on smooth muscle and small blood vessels, such as histamine, tryptase, prostaglandin D<sub>2</sub> and leukotriene C<sub>4</sub>, which cause the immediate asthmatic reaction. Activation of eosinophils, by IgE binding, leads to release of a variety of mediators, such as eosinophilic cationic protein, which are predominantly toxic to airway cells.

**Remodelling** Airway smooth muscle undergoes hypertrophy and hyperplasia leading to a larger fraction of the wall being occupied by smooth muscle tissue. The airway wall is further thickened by deposition of repair collagens and matrix proteins below the basement membrane. The airway epithelium is damaged, with loss of the ciliated columnar cells into the lumen. The epithelium undergoes metaplasia with an increase in the number of mucus-secreting goblet cells.

## Precipitating factors

The major allergen is the house dust mite and its faeces. Non-specific factors causing wheezing are viral infections, cold air, exercise, irritant dusts, vapours and fumes (cigarette smoke, perfume, exhaust fumes), emotion and drugs (NSAIDs, aspirin and  $\beta$ -blockers).

Over 250 materials encountered at the workplace give rise to occupational asthma, which typically improves on days away from work and during holidays. Common occupations associated with asthma are veterinary medicine and animal handling (allergens from mouse, rat and rabbit urine and fur), bakery (wheat, rye) and laundry work (biological enzymes).

A rare cause of asthma is the airborne spores of *Aspergillus fumigatus*, a soil mould. There are fleeting shadows on the chest X-ray and peripheral blood eosinophilia (allergic bronchopulmonary aspergillosis), not to be confused with the severe aspergillus pneumonia occurring in the immunocompromised.

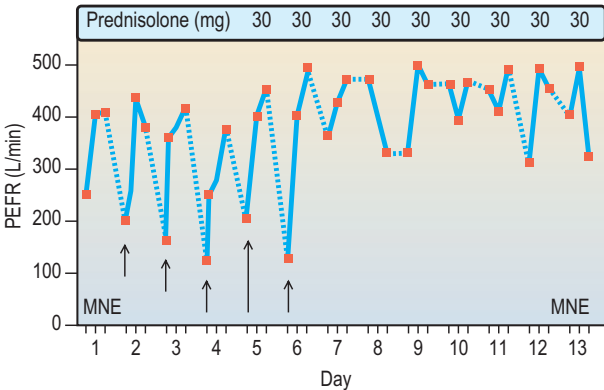
## Clinical features

The principal symptoms of asthma are wheezing attacks, shortness of breath, chest tightness and cough (may be the only symptom). Symptoms tend to be intermittent, worse at night and in the early morning and provoked by triggers as above. Some patients have just one or two attacks a year, whereas others have chronic symptoms. On examination, during an attack, there is reduced chest expansion, prolonged expiratory time and bilateral expiratory polyphonic wheezes.

## Investigations

The diagnosis of asthma is made on the history and evidence of airflow obstruction (by spirometry or PEF) when symptomatic. There is no single satisfactory diagnostic test for all asthmatic patients:

- Demonstration of variable (at least 15%) airflow limitation by measurement of PEFR or FEV<sub>1</sub>:
  - Measurement of PEFR by the patient on waking, during the day and before bed – most asthmatic individuals will show obvious diurnal variation, with lowest values occurring in the early morning (the ‘morning dip’, Fig. 11.3)
  - An increase after inhalation of a bronchodilator, e.g. salbutamol
  - A decrease after 6 minutes of exercise, e.g. running.
- Histamine or methacholine challenge in difficult cases. Bronchial hyper-reactivity is demonstrated by asking the patient to inhale gradually increasing doses of histamine or methacholine and demonstrating a fall in FEV<sub>1</sub>. The test should not be performed on individuals who have poor lung function (FEV<sub>1</sub> < 1.5 L) or a history of ‘brittle’ asthma.
- Skin-prick tests should be performed in all cases of asthma to help identify allergic causes. A weal develops 15 minutes after allergen injection in the epidermis of the forearm. Measurement of allergen-specific IgE in the serum is also sometimes used.
- Chest X-ray is performed during an acute attack (see later) or to identify the pulmonary shadows associated with allergic bronchopulmonary aspergillosis.



**Fig. 11.3** Diurnal variability in PEF in asthma, showing the effect of steroids. The arrows indicate the morning ‘dips’. M, morning; N, noon; E, evening.

## Management

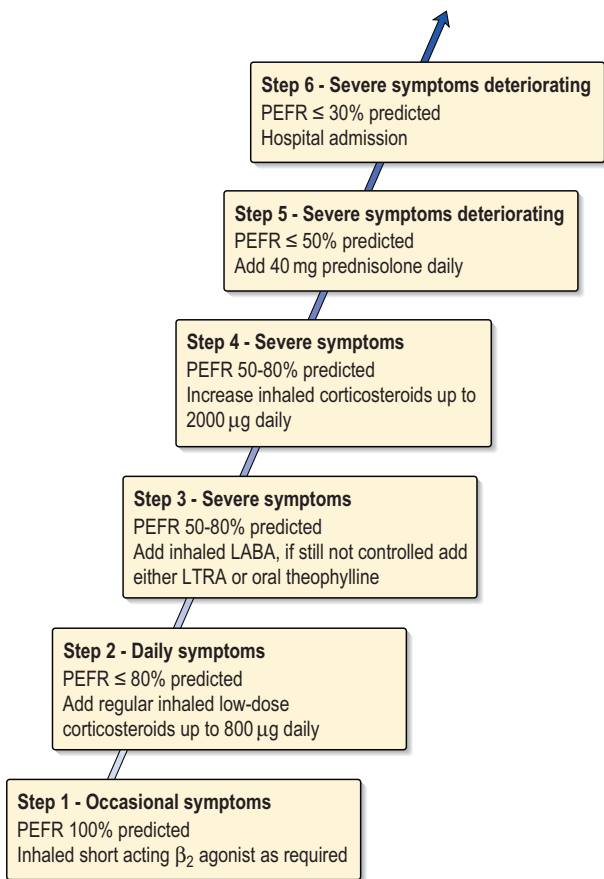
The effective management of asthma centres on patient and family education, antismoking advice (p. 512), the avoidance of precipitating factors and specific drug treatment. Self-management programmes have been incorporated into patient care and involve individualized self-treatment plans based on self-monitoring of PEFr and symptoms and a written action plan showing patients how to act early in exacerbations. Patients should be offered influenza immunization.

**Avoidance of precipitating factors** Patients should be discouraged from smoking and avoid allergens, e.g. household pets, which have been identified as extrinsic causes. Occupational asthma should be identified early because removal of the patient from exposure may cure the asthma and continued exposure may become self-perpetuating even when exposure ceases.  $\beta$ -Blockers in any form are absolutely contraindicated in patients with asthma. Individuals intolerant of aspirin should avoid all NSAIDs.

**Drug treatment** Most drugs are delivered directly into the lungs as aerosols (metered-dose inhaler  $\pm$  spacer, p. 566) or dry powder inhalers, which means that lower doses can be used and systemic side-effects are reduced compared to oral treatment. Asthma is managed with a stepwise approach which depends partly on repeated measurements of PEFr by the patient (Fig. 11.4). The aim is that the patient starts treatment at the step most appropriate to the initial severity, and when control of symptoms is achieved, treatment is gradually reduced to the previous step over a period of 1–3 months. The aim of treatment is to have control of the disease, i.e. no day or night symptoms, no exacerbations, no need for relieving bronchodilators and normal lung function ( $FEV_1$  or PEF > 80% predicted):

- $\beta_2$ -Adrenoceptor agonists (p. 564), e.g. salbutamol, terbutaline and the longer-acting, salmeterol and formoterol, relax bronchial smooth muscle and cause bronchial dilatation.
- Antimuscarinic bronchodilators (p. 564), e.g. ipratropium bromide or oxitropium bromide, cause bronchodilatation and may be additive to adrenoceptor stimulants.
- Corticosteroids are powerful anti-inflammatory agents. Inhaled steroids (p. 568), e.g. beclometasone dipropionate, budesonide and fluticasone propionate, are used as maintenance treatment in all but very mild asthmatic individuals. Side-effects of inhaled steroids are oral candidiasis, hoarseness and rarely cataract formation. Oral steroids are occasionally necessary in those patients not controlled on inhaled steroids. Side-effects are listed on page 665.
- Anti-inflammatory agents, e.g. sodium cromoglicate, prevent activation of inflammatory cells and may be useful in mild asthma. They are not as effective as inhaled steroids, but are free of side-effects, and thus may have some advantages in children.





- Patient measures PEFR at home to guide treatment.
- Short-acting inhaled  $\beta$  agonist taken at any step as needed for symptom relief.
- A rescue of oral steroids (used for shortest time possible) may be needed at any step.
- Decrease treatment after 1–3 months' stability

LTRA - Leukotriene receptor antagonist

LABA - inhaled long-acting  $\beta_2$  agonist

**Fig. 11.4** The stepwise management of asthma in adults.

- Cysteinyl leukotriene receptor antagonists (LTRAs), e.g. montelukast and zafirlukast, are given orally. Leukotrienes are inflammatory mediators released by mast cells which cause bronchoconstriction and increased production of mucus. LTRAs are particularly useful in patients who still have symptoms despite taking high-dose inhaled or oral corticosteroids, and in patients with asthma induced by aspirin.
- Steroid-sparing agents. Methotrexate, ciclosporin, anti-IgE monoclonal antibody (omalizumab), intravenous immunoglobulin and etanercept are used occasionally.

## Acute severe asthma

This is severe progressive asthmatic symptoms over a number of hours or days. It is a medical emergency that must be recognized and treated immediately at home with subsequent transfer to hospital (Emergency Box 11.1). In the UK, 1400 patients die from asthma each year and 90% of these deaths are preventable by correct management.

### Clinical features

Patients with acute severe asthma typically have:

- Inability to complete a sentence in one breath
- Respiratory rate  $\geq 25$  breaths/min
- Heart rate  $\geq 110$  beats/min
- PEFr 33–50% of predicted normal or patient's best.

Life-threatening features are any one of the following in a patient with acute severe asthma:

- Silent chest, cyanosis or feeble respiratory effort
- Exhaustion, altered conscious level
- Bradycardia or hypotension
- PEFr  $< 33\%$  of predicted or best
- $P_{aO_2} < 8$  kPa.

Near fatal asthma is  $P_{aCO_2} > 6$  kPa, and a low or falling arterial pH.

The management of acute severe asthma is shown in Emergency Box 11.1. Patients with moderate asthma (defined as increasing symptoms, PEFr 50–75%, no features of acute severe asthma) who present to hospital are treated with a nebulized  $\beta$ -agonist. Provided they improve and are then stable for at least 1 hour, they may be discharged with oral prednisolone 40 mg daily for 1 week.

## PNEUMONIA

Pneumonia is defined as an inflammation of the substance of the lungs and is usually caused by bacteria. Pneumonia can be classified both anatomically,



## Emergency Box 11.1

### Management of acute severe asthma in hospital

#### Initial treatment

- Oxygen therapy to maintain oxygen saturation ( $SpO_2$ ) 94–98%.
- Nebulized salbutamol 5 mg or terbutaline 10 mg with oxygen as the driving gas.
- Hydrocortisone 200 mg intravenously.
- Antibiotics if evidence of infection: focal shadowing on the chest X-ray, purulent sputum.
- Fluids, aim for 2.5–3 L/day, intravenously if necessary.

#### Investigations

- Chest X-ray to exclude pneumothorax or pneumonia.
- Pulse oximetry (continuous).
- Arterial blood gases if  $SpO_2 < 92\%$ . May need repeat depending on response.
- PEFR before and after initial treatment.
- Urea and electrolytes – steroids and salbutamol may result in hypokalaemia.

#### If improved – continue

Oxygen therapy.

Prednisolone oral, 40–50 mg for 7 days.

Nebulized  $\beta_2$ -agonist 4-hourly

#### After 24 hours

Add in high-dose inhaled corticosteroid

Change nebulized to inhaled  $\beta_2$ -agonist

#### Discharge from hospital when:

- Free of SOB or wheeze
- PEFR  $> 75\%$  predicted & diurnal variability  $< 25\%$
- Stable on discharge treatment for 24 h

Before discharge: check inhaler technique, determine reason for exacerbation and issue a written asthma plan discussed with patient.

#### Life-threatening features present or poor response to treatment

Oxygen therapy.

Hydrocortisone 200 mg i.v. 4-hourly.

Nebulized  $\beta_2$ -agonist every 10–20 min.

Add nebulized ipratropium bromide 0.5 mg 4-6-hourly.

Magnesium sulphate 1.2–2 g i.v. over 20 min.

If no improvement give:

Salbutamol 3–20  $\mu\text{g}/\text{min}$  (5 mg salbutamol in 500 mL 0.9% saline or 5% dextrose, infuse at 0.3–2 mL/min)

Inform ITU of possible admission for intubation and mechanical ventilation.

e.g. lobar (affecting the whole of one lobe) and bronchopneumonia (affecting the lobules and bronchi), or on the basis of aetiology (Table 11.7). *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* is a cause of pneumonia and is considered separately, as both mode of presentation and treatment are different from the other pneumonias. In about 25% of patients no organism is isolated. Pneumonia may also result from chemical causes (e.g. aspiration of vomit) and radiotherapy.

## Clinical features

Symptoms and signs vary according to the infecting agent and to the immune state of the patient. Most commonly there is pyrexia, combined with respiratory symptoms such as cough, sputum production, pleurisy and dyspnoea. Signs of consolidation and a pleural rub may be present. There may be a pleural effusion. Elderly patients often have fewer symptoms than younger

**Table 11.7** The aetiology of pneumonia in the UK

| Infecting agent   | Clinical circumstances   |
|---|--|
| <i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i>   | Community pneumonia patients usually previously fit  |
| <i>Mycoplasma pneumoniae</i>  | As above   |
| Influenza A virus (usually with a bacterial component)  | As above   |
| <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i>   | Pre-existing lung disease: COPD  |
| <i>Chlamydia pneumoniae</i>   | Community-acquired pneumonia   |
| <i>Chlamydia psittaci</i>   | Contact with birds (though not inevitable)   |
| <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>  | Children, intravenous drug abusers, associated with influenza virus infections               |
| <i>Legionella pneumophila</i>   | Institutional outbreaks (hospitals and hotels), sporadic, endemic                            |
| <i>Coxiella burnetii</i>  | Abattoir and animal-hide workers   |
| <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>   | Cystic fibrosis  |
| Enteric Gram-negative bacilli   |  |
| <i>Pneumocystis jirovecii</i><br><i>Actinomyces israelii</i><br><i>Nocardia asteroides</i><br>Cytomegalovirus<br><i>Aspergillus fumigatus</i> | } Immunosuppressed (AIDS, lymphomas, leukaemias, use of cytotoxic drugs and corticosteroids) |
| NB Causes vary in different countries. <i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> accounts for 35–80% of cases in the UK.                                |  |

patients or may present with a confusional state. The severity of community-acquired pneumonia is assessed by clinical and laboratory criteria (Table 11.8). Precipitating factors for pneumonia are underlying lung disease, smoking, alcohol abuse, immunosuppression and other chronic illnesses. The clinical history should enquire about contact with birds (possible psittacosis), and farm animals (*Coxiella burnetii*, causative organism of Q fever), recent stays in large hotels or institutions (*Legionella pneumophila*), chronic alcohol abuse (*M. tuberculosis*, anaerobic organisms), intravenous drug abuse (*Staph. aureus*, *M. tuberculosis*) and contact with other patients with pneumonia.

## Investigations

Many otherwise fit patients with mild (Table 11.8) community-acquired pneumonia are treated as outpatients and the only investigation needed is a chest X-ray. Patients admitted to hospital require investigations to identify the cause and severity of the pneumonia:

- *Chest X-ray* confirms the area of consolidation, but these changes may lag behind the clinical course (Fig 11.5). The chest X-ray is repeated at 6 weeks after the acute illness and any persisting abnormalities suggest a bronchial abnormality usually a carcinoma. The chest X-ray is repeated more frequently if the acute illness is not responding to treatment.

**Table 11.8** Diagnosis of severe community-acquired pneumonia using CURB-65 and other criteria

### Score 1 (maximum score = 6) for each of:

- Confusion – new disorientation in person, place or time
- Urea >7 mmol/L
- Respiratory rate  $\geq$  30/min
- Blood pressure  
Systolic <90  
Diastolic  $\leq$  60 mmHg)
- Age > 65 years

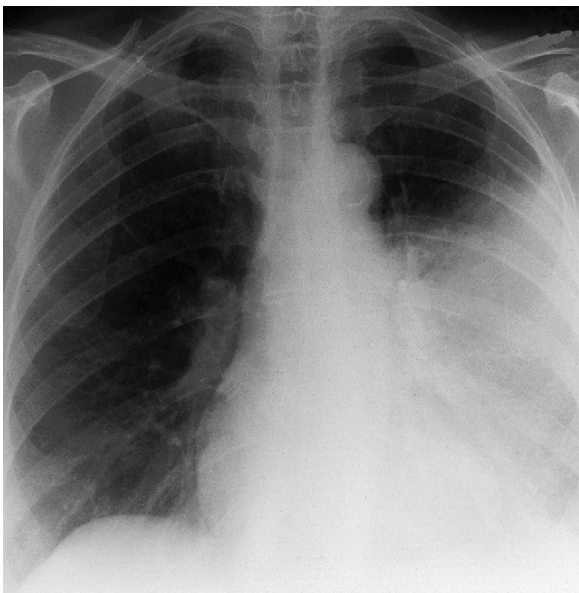
Score 0–1 – Treat as outpatient

Score 2 – Admit to hospital

Score  $\geq$  3 (severe pneumonia) – often require ITU care

### Other markers of severe pneumonia

- Chest X-ray – more than one lobe involved
- $P_aO_2$  <8 kPa
- Low albumin (<35 g/L)
- White cell count (< $4 \times 10^9/L$  or  $>20 \times 10^9/L$ )
- Blood culture – positive



**Fig. 11.5** Chest X-ray showing lobar pneumonia. There is an ill-defined area of opacity in the left lower zone without loss of volume (i.e. no shift of structures such as the mediastinum or trachea). The opacity is caused by the filling of alveolar spaces with fluid instead of air.

- *Sputum* for Gram stain, culture and sensitivity tests.
- *Blood tests.* A white cell count above  $15 \times 10^9/L$  suggests bacterial infection. There may be lymphopenia with *Legionella* pneumonia. Marked red cell agglutination on the blood film suggests the presence of cold agglutinins (immunoglobulins that agglutinate reds cells at  $4^\circ C$ ), which are raised in 50% of patients with *Mycoplasma* pneumonia. Liver biochemistry may be non-specifically abnormal and serum electrolytes may show a raised urea and hyponatraemia. Blood cultures are also taken.
- *Serology.* Some organisms, e.g. mycoplasma, causing pneumonia can be diagnosed by detection of a raised IgM antibody by immunofluorescent tests or by a fourfold rise in antibody titre from blood taken early in the clinical course and 10–14 days later.
- *Arterial blood gases.*  $P_{aO_2} < 8$  kPa or rising  $P_{aCO_2}$  indicates severe pneumonia.
- *Urine* is sent for legionella and pneumococcal antigen testing in patients with indicators of severe pneumonia (Table 11.8).

## Differential diagnosis

This includes pulmonary embolism, pulmonary oedema, pulmonary haemorrhage, bronchial carcinoma, hypersensitivity pneumonitis and some types of diffuse parenchymal lung disease with acute onset.

## Management

Antibiotic treatment of community-acquired pneumonia is summarized in Figure 11.6. In addition, pleuritic pain requires analgesia, and humidified oxygen is given if there is hypoxaemia. Fluids are encouraged, to avoid dehydration. Physiotherapy is needed to help and encourage the patient to cough. Patients with severe pneumonia should be assessed for management on the intensive care unit. Hospital-acquired (nosocomial) pneumonia is often due to infection with Gram-negative organisms and treatment is with co-amoxiclav 500 mg three times daily or in more severe cases a second generation cephalosporin, e.g. cefuroxime and an aminoglycoside (e.g. gentamicin). Metronidazole is added in patients at risk of anaerobic infection, e.g. prolonged ITU stay or aspiration in a comatose patient. Antibiotic treatment in all cases is adjusted on the basis of the results of sputum microscopy and culture.

## Complications

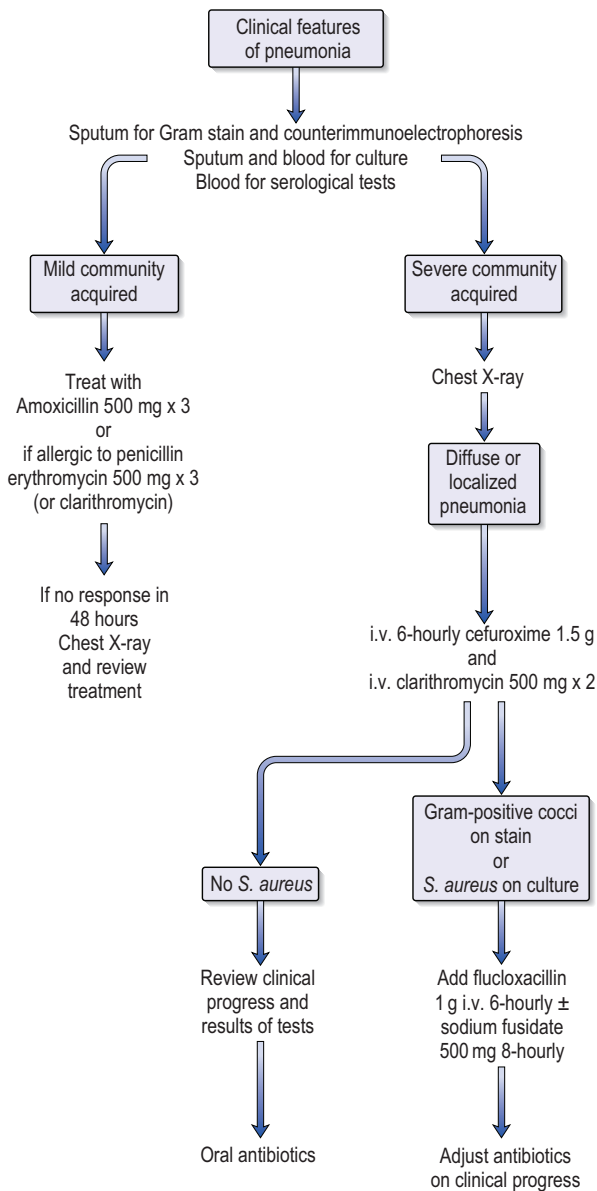
Complications of pneumonia include lung abscess (p. 540) and empyema (p. 540).

### Specific forms of pneumonia

**Mycoplasma pneumoniae** commonly presents in young adults with generalized features such as headaches and malaise, which may precede chest symptoms by 1–5 days. Physical signs in the chest may be scanty, and chest X-ray appearances frequently do not correlate with the clinical state of the patient. Treatment is with macrolides, e.g. erythromycin 500 mg four times daily (or clarithromycin or azithromycin) for 7–10 days. Extrapulmonary complications (myocarditis, erythema multiforme, haemolytic anaemia and meningoencephalitis) will occasionally dominate the clinical picture.

**Haemophilus influenzae** is commonly the cause of pneumonia in patients with COPD. There are no other features to differentiate it from other causes of bacterial pneumonia. Treatment is with oral amoxicillin 500 mg three times daily.

**Chlamydia** *Chlamydia pneumoniae* accounts for 4–13% of cases of community-acquired pneumonia. Patients with *C. psittaci* pneumonia may give a history of contact with infected birds, particularly parrots. Symptoms include malaise, fever, cough and muscular pains, which may be low grade and protracted over many months. Occasionally the presentation mimics





**Fig. 11.6** Algorithm for the management of community-acquired pneumonia.

- Severity of pneumonia is assessed using criteria listed in Table 11.8
- Fluoroquinolones, e.g. ciprofloxacin, are recommended for those intolerant of penicillins or macrolides
- Choice of antibiotics may be narrowed once microbiological results are available
- Intravenous antibiotics are switched to oral when the patient has been afebrile for 24 hours and there is no contraindication to oral treatment
- Antibiotic treatment is usually for a total of 7–10 days.



meningitis, with a high fever, prostration, photophobia and neck stiffness. Diagnosis of *Chlamydia* infection is made by demonstrating a rising serum titre of complement-fixing antibody. *C. pneumoniae* is distinguished from *C. psittaci* infection by type-specific immunofluorescence tests. Treatment of *Chlamydia* infection is with macrolides or tetracycline.

***Staphylococcus aureus*** usually causes pneumonia only after a preceding influenza viral illness or in staphylococcal septicaemia (occurs in intravenous drug users or in patients with central venous catheters). It results in patchy areas of consolidation which can break down to form abscesses that appear as cysts on the chest X-ray. Pneumothorax, effusions and empyemas are frequent, and septicaemia may develop with metastatic abscesses in other organs. All patients with this form of pneumonia are extremely ill and the mortality rate is in excess of 25%. Treatment is with intravenous flucloxacillin.

***Legionella pneumophila*** is acquired by the inhalation of aerosols or microaspiration of infected water containing legionella. Infection is linked to contamination of water distribution systems in hotels, hospitals and workplaces and may also occur sporadically and in the immunosuppressed. Pneumonia tends to be more severe than with most other pathogens associated with community-acquired pneumonia.

A strong presumptive diagnosis of *L. pneumophila* infection is possible in the majority of patients if they have three of the four following features:

- A prodromal virus-like illness
- A dry cough, confusion or diarrhoea
- Lymphopenia without marked leucocytosis
- Hyponatraemia.

Diagnosis is by specific antigen detection in the urine or by direct fluorescent antibody staining of the organism in the pleural fluid, sputum or bronchial washings. Treatment is with clarithromycin, ciprofloxacin or rifampicin for 14–21 days.

***Pseudomonas aeruginosa*** is seen in the immunocompromised and in patients with CF, in whom its presence is associated with a worsening of the

clinical condition and increasing mortality. Treatment includes intravenous ceftazidime, ciprofloxacin, tobramycin or ticarcillin. Inhaled tobramycin is used in CF patients (p. 526).

***Pneumocystis jiroveci*** is the most common opportunistic infection in patients with untreated AIDS. The clinical features and treatment of this and other opportunistic infection are described on page 51.

**Aspiration pneumonia** Aspiration of gastric contents into the lungs can produce a severe destructive pneumonia as a result of the corrosive effect of gastric acid – Mendelson’s syndrome. Aspiration usually occurs into the posterior segment of the right lower lobe because of the bronchial anatomy. It is associated with periods of impaired consciousness, structural abnormalities, such as tracheo-oesophageal fistulae or oesophageal strictures, and bulbar palsy. Infection is often due to anaerobes, and treatment must include metronidazole.

### Complications of pneumonia: lung abscess and empyema

A lung abscess results from localized suppuration of the lung associated with cavity formation, often with a fluid level on the chest X-ray. Empyema means the presence of pus in the pleural cavity, usually from rupture of a lung abscess into the pleural cavity, or from bacterial spread from a severe pneumonia.

A lung abscess develops in the following circumstances:

- Complicating aspiration pneumonia or bacterial pneumonia caused by *Staph. aureus* or *Klebsiella pneumoniae*
- Secondary to bronchial obstruction by tumour or foreign body
- From septic emboli from a focus elsewhere (usually *Staph. aureus*)
- Secondary to infarction.

### Clinical features

Lung abscess presents with persisting or worsening pneumonia, often with the production of copious amounts of foul-smelling sputum. With empyema the patient is usually very ill, with a high fever and neutrophil leucocytosis. There may be malaise, weight loss and clubbing of the digits.

### Investigations

Bacteriological investigation is best conducted on specimens obtained by transtracheal aspiration, bronchoscopy or percutaneous transthoracic aspiration. Bronchoscopy is helpful to exclude carcinomas and foreign bodies.

### Management

Antibiotics are given to cover both aerobic and anaerobic organisms. Intravenous cefuroxime, and metronidazole are given for 5 days, followed by oral

cefaclor and metronidazole for several weeks. Empyemas should be treated by prompt tube drainage or rib resection and drainage of the empyema cavity. Abscesses occasionally require surgery.

## TUBERCULOSIS<sup>nd</sup>

### Epidemiology

Tuberculosis (TB) is the most common cause of death world-wide from a single infectious disease and is on the increase in most parts of the world. The reasons for this are primarily inadequate programmes for disease control, multiple drug resistance, immunosuppression associated with HIV infection (in whom the disease may present atypically) and a rapid rise in the world population of young adults, the group with the highest mortality from tuberculosis. In the UK the incidence of tuberculosis is highest in Asian and West Indian immigrants, children of these immigrants, the homeless and those with HIV infection. Rates in the otherwise healthy indigenous white population have fallen to very low levels.

### Pathology

The initial infection with *M. tuberculosis* is known as primary tuberculosis and usually occurs in the upper region of the lung producing a subpleural lesion called the Ghon focus (Fig. 11.7). The primary lesion may also occur in the gastrointestinal tract, particularly the ileocaecal region. The primary focus is characterized by exudation and infiltration with neutrophil granulocytes. These are replaced by macrophages which engulf the bacilli and result in the typical granulomatous lesions, which consist of central areas of caseation surrounded by epithelioid cells and Langhans' giant cells (both derived from the macrophage). The primary focus is almost always accompanied by caseous lesions in the regional lymph nodes (mediastinal and cervical) – together these constitute the Ghon complex. In most people the primary infection and the lymph nodes heal completely and become calcified. However, they may harbour tubercle bacilli which may become reactivated if there is depression of the host defence system. Occasionally there is dissemination of the primary infection, producing miliary tuberculosis.

Reactivation results in typical post-primary tuberculosis. Post-primary tuberculosis refers to all forms of tuberculosis that develop after the first few weeks of the primary infection when immunity to the mycobacteria has developed. Reinfection after successful treatment for TB is uncommon except in immunocompromised patients such as HIV-infected individuals.

### Clinical features

Primary TB is usually symptomless; occasionally there may be erythema nodosum (p. 812), a small pleural effusion or pulmonary collapse caused by compression of a lobar bronchus by enlarged nodes (Fig. 11.7). Miliary TB is

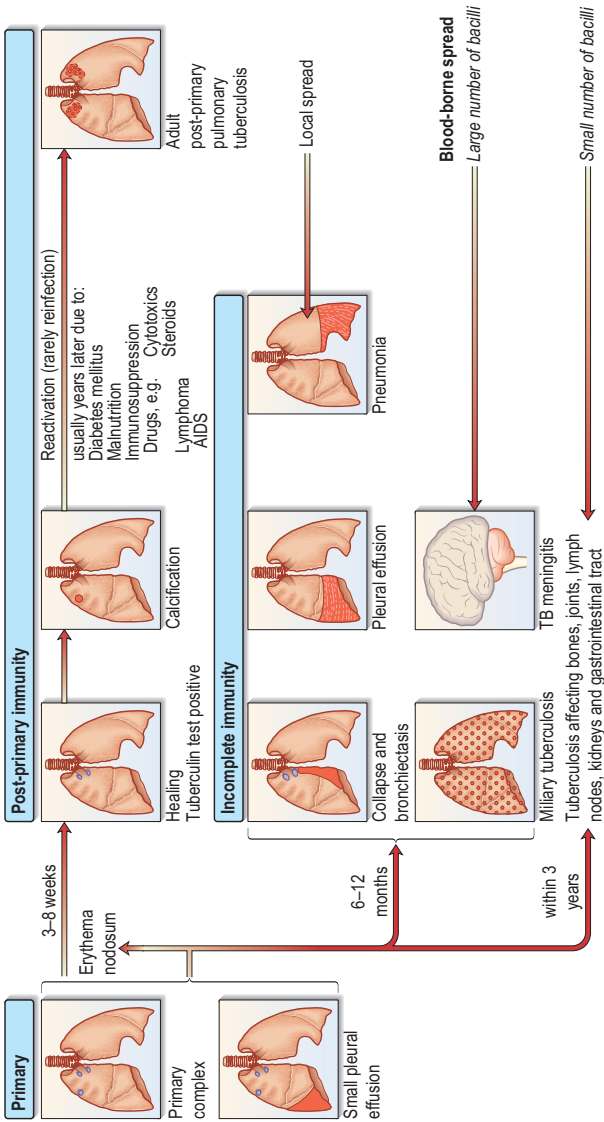


Fig. 11.7 Manifestations of primary and post-primary tuberculosis.

the result of acute dissemination of tubercle bacilli via the bloodstream. Patients, especially the elderly, may present with non-specific ill-health, fever of unknown origin, weight loss and a few other localizing symptoms. Occasionally the disease presents as tuberculous meningitis, and in the later stages there may be enlargement of the liver and spleen. Choroidal tubercles (yellowy/white raised lesions about one-quarter the diameter of the optic disc) are occasionally seen in the eye. Most commonly clinical tuberculosis represents delayed reactivation. Symptoms begin insidiously, with malaise, anorexia, weight loss, fever and cough. Sputum is mucoid purulent or blood-stained, but night sweats are uncommon. There are often no physical signs, although occasionally signs of a pneumonia or pleural effusion may be present.

Tuberculous disease (as above) must be differentiated from latent tuberculous infection. Infection implies the presence of small numbers of tubercle bacilli in the body; the tuberculin test is positive (as with disease), but the chest X-ray is normal and the patient asymptomatic.

## Investigations

In order to minimize the risk of transmission to other people, patients who are suspected of having pulmonary TB should be isolated in a ward side-room until sputum specimens are negative. This is to minimize the risk of transmission to other patients in a confirmed case. Because of the rising incidence of drug-resistant TB, the diagnosis is confirmed bacteriologically whenever possible and to obtain drug sensitivities.

- Chest X-ray typically shows patchy or nodular shadows in the upper zones, with loss of volume, and fibrosis with or without cavitation. With miliary tuberculosis the chest X-ray may be normal or show miliary shadows 1–2 mm in diameter throughout the lung.
- Sputum is stained with an auramine-phenol fluorescent test or the less sensitive Ziehl–Neelsen (ZN) stain for acid- and alcohol-fast bacilli. Culture of sputum is more sensitive than microscopy and allows antibiotic sensitivity testing. Solid culture mediums (e.g. Lowenstein–Jensen) take 4–8 weeks for organism recovery and are gradually being replaced by liquid culture mediums (Bactec) which shorten the recovery time by 2–3 weeks. Sensitivity testing takes a further 3–4 weeks.
- Bronchoscopy with washings of the affected lobes is useful if no sputum is available.
- The diagnosis of extrapulmonary TB depends on a high index of clinical suspicion. Recovery of the organism from specimens is still necessary wherever possible. This may involve lymph node biopsy, bone biopsy, urine testing or aspiration of pericardial fluid.
- Lumbar puncture and CSF examination for evidence of tuberculous infection is indicated in all cases of miliary TB. This is due to the high rate of

blood-borne spread to meninges, and positive CSF will alter the length of treatment.

- Skin testing for TB (Mantoux test) is rarely of any value in the diagnosis or exclusion of active TB. It is neither sensitive nor specific.
- Whole blood interferon-gamma assay detects interferon produced by T-cells after incubation with TB antigens in individuals who have been sensitized to TB.
- HIV testing should be considered if risk assessment shows the patient to be from an area or background with increased risk of HIV co-infection. TB is an AIDS-defining illness.

## Management

Tuberculosis should be treated by experienced physicians working closely with TB nurse specialists or TB health visitors. The latter are helpful in monitoring patients' compliance with treatment and the accuracy and continuity of prescribing. It is a statutory requirement in the UK that all cases of TB must be notified to the local Public Health Authority so that contact tracing and screening can be arranged.

Patients who are ill, sputum-smear positive (patients with three negative smears are considered non-infectious), highly infectious patients (particularly multidrug-resistant TB), and those unlikely to be compliant with treatment should be initially treated in hospital.

A 6-month regimen comprising rifampicin, isoniazid, pyrazinamide and ethambutol for the initial 2 months followed by rifampicin and isoniazid for a further 4 months is standard treatment. Four drugs should be continued for longer than 2 months if susceptibility testing is still outstanding. Pyridoxine 10 mg daily is given to reduce the risk of isoniazid-induced peripheral neuropathy. Treatment time is extended in TB meningitis (to 12 months) and bone TB (to 9 months). Streptomycin is now rarely used in the UK, but it may be added if the organism is resistant to isoniazid. Significant side-effects are uncommon and are listed in Table 11.9. A transient asymptomatic rise in the serum aminotransferase level may occur with rifampicin, but treatment is only stopped if hepatitis develops. The major causes of treatment failure are incorrect prescribing by the doctor and inadequate compliance by the patient. Vagrants, alcoholics, homeless and the mentally ill are most likely to be non-compliant with therapy. In order to improve compliance special clinics are used to supervise treatment regimens where the ingestion of every drug dose is witnessed (directly observed therapy, DOTS). Incentives to attend include free meals and cash payments.

Multidrug-resistant (MDR, resistance to isoniazid and rifampicin) and extensively drug-resistant TB (EDR, resistance to first-line and some second-line treatment) is a world-wide major problem. It occurs mainly in HIV-infected patients who can then transmit the infection to healthcare workers and other patients. Treatment of MDR and EDR is difficult and uses

**Table 11.9** Side-effects of the main antituberculous drugs

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Rifampicin   | Stains body secretions and urine pink  |
|              | Induces liver enzymes – concomitant drug treatment may be less effective   |
|              | Elevation of liver transferases and hepatitis  |
| Isoniazid    | Thrombocytopenia (rarely)  |
|              | Polyneuropathy (rarely), prevented by co-administration of pyridoxine  |
|              | Allergic reactions – skin rash and fever<br>Hepatitis  |
| Pyrazinamide | Hepatitis – rarely   |
|              | Hyperuricaemia and gout  |
|              | Rash and arthralgia  |
| Ethambutol   | Optic neuritis – testing of visual acuity (Snellen chart) and red-green colour perception performed before treatment. Patients asked to report visual changes (defects, colour blindness, acuity) during treatment |

combination treatment (including capreomycin, clarithromycin, azithromycin and ciprofloxacin) to which the organism is sensitive for up to 2 years.

## Prevention and chemoprophylaxis

Close contacts of a case are screened for evidence of disease with a chest X-ray and a Mantoux test (positive if area of induration  $\geq 10$  mm 72 hours after intradermal injection of purified protein derivative of *Mycobacterium* TB) or whole blood interferon-gamma assay. Antituberculous treatment is given if the chest X-ray shows evidence of disease or if the Mantoux test is negative initially but becomes positive on repeat testing 6 weeks later. In adults, an initial positive tuberculin test with a normal chest X-ray is not usually taken as indication of disease.

Vaccination with BCG (Bacille Calmette–Guérin) reduces the risk of developing tuberculosis. It is a bovine strain of *M. tuberculosis* which has lost its virulence after growth in the laboratory for many years. Immunization produces cellular immunity and a positive Mantoux test. In the UK, BCG vaccination is offered to infants living in areas with a high immigrant population, to previously unvaccinated new immigrants from high-prevalence countries for TB, to persons at occupational risk of TB (healthcare workers, veterinary staff, staff of prisons) and to contacts of known cases. BCG vaccination is given to all persons in developing countries where TB is more prevalent.

Targeted tuberculin testing for latent TB infection is an essential component of TB control and identifies people at high risk for developing clinical

disease. High-risk groups for developing TB include recent immigrants from high-prevalence countries, injection drug users and HIV-positive patients. Patients with tuberculous infection identified by tuberculin testing are usually treated with one drug for 6 months (chemoprophylaxis) to prevent progression to disease.

Patients with chest X-ray changes compatible with previous tuberculosis and who are about to undergo treatment with an immunosuppressive agent should also receive chemoprophylaxis with isoniazid.

## DIFFUSE DISEASES OF THE LUNG PARENCHYMA

Diffuse parenchymal lung disorders (DPLD) also referred to as interstitial lung disease is a heterogeneous group of lung diseases with bilateral diffuse lung injury and inflammation that can progress to lung fibrosis (Fig. 11.8). The process involves not only the interstitial space but also the alveoli, bronchioles and blood vessels. The diseases have common clinical, radiological and pulmonary function features. Presentation is with shortness of breath on exertion, a persistent non-productive cough, an abnormal chest X-ray (bilateral diffuse pulmonary infiltrates), or with pulmonary symptoms associated with another disease such as a connective tissue disease. Pulmonary infection, malignancy, and pulmonary oedema may mimic interstitial lung disease.

### Granulomatous lung disease

A granuloma is a mass or nodule of chronic inflammatory tissue formed by the response of macrophages and histiocytes to a slowly soluble antigen or irritant. It is characterized by the presence of epithelioid multinucleate giant cells. Sarcoidosis is the most common cause of lung granulomas.

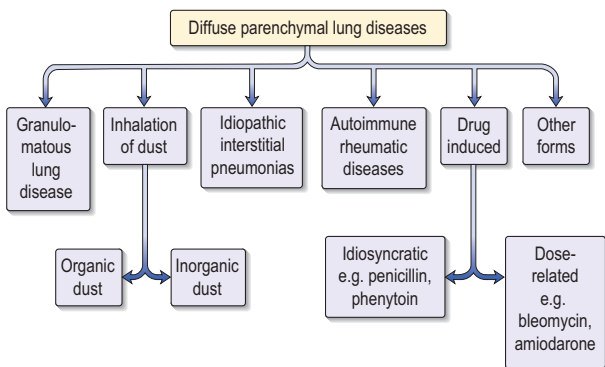


Fig 11.8 Causes of diffuse parenchymal lung diseases.



## Sarcoidosis

Sarcoidosis is a multisystem granulomatous disorder of unknown cause typically affecting young and middle-aged adults. It usually presents with bilateral hilar lymphadenopathy (BHL) and/or pulmonary infiltrations, and skin or eye lesions. In about half of cases, the disease is detected incidentally on a routine chest X-ray in an asymptomatic individual.

## Epidemiology

Sarcoidosis occurs in all ethnic groups but is uncommon in Japan. The course of the disease is more severe in African blacks than in whites.

## Immunopathology

- Typical non-caseating (compare with TB) sarcoid granuloma consists of a focal accumulation of epithelioid cells, macrophages and lymphocytes, mainly T cells.
- Depressed cell-mediated reactivity to antigens, such as tuberculin and *Candida albicans*, and an overall lymphopenia with low circulating T cells, as a result of sequestration of lymphocytes within the lung and slightly increased B cells.
- Increased number of cells (particularly CD4 helper) in bronchoalveolar lavage.
- Transbronchial biopsies show infiltration of alveolar walls and interstitial spaces with mononuclear cells before granuloma formation.

## Clinical features

Sarcoidosis can affect any organ, particularly the lung, skin and eyes (Table 11.10). Lung disease presents with a non-productive cough, breathlessness and sometimes a wheeze. Pulmonary infiltration may predominate, and, in a minority of patients there is progressive fibrosis resulting in increasing effort dyspnoea, cor pulmonale and death. Chest examination is normal or there are fine crackles particularly anteriorly. Finger clubbing is rare and when present alternative diagnoses should be considered, e.g. other causes of pulmonary fibrosis, tuberculosis, malignancy. Löfgren's syndrome consists of the triad of erythema nodosum (p. 812), arthralgia, and bilateral hilar lymphadenopathy on chest X-ray (see later); it carries an excellent prognosis. Asymptomatic disease may be identified when a chest X-ray is performed for other reasons. Fatigue is a major problem in many patients.

## Investigations

Diagnosis depends on a compatible clinical picture, exclusion of diseases with a similar presentation (see differential diagnosis) and biopsy for histological diagnosis if possible. Common biopsy sites are enlarged lymph nodes, skin lesions and transbronchial biopsy at bronchoscopy.

**Table 11.10** Clinical features of sarcoidosis

| System       | Symptoms and signs  |
|--------------|---|
| Chest        | Cough, breathlessness, wheeze, fine crackles on examination   |
| Skin         | Erythema nodosum, waxy maculopapular lesions, lupus pernio (red/blue infiltration of the nose), infiltration of scars by granulomas   |
| Eye          | Anterior and posterior uveitis, conjunctival nodules, lacrimal gland enlargement, uveoparotid fever (Heerfordt's syndrome: uveitis, parotid gland enlargement and facial nerve palsy) |
| Bone         | Arthralgias, bone cysts   |
| Metabolic    | Hypercalcaemia (sarcoid macrophages produce 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D)  |
| Liver        | Granulomatous hepatitis, hepatosplenomegaly   |
| Neurological | Meningeal inflammation, seizures, mass lesions, hypothalamic-pituitary infiltration, diffuse sensorimotor neuropathy, mononeuropathy  |
| Cardiac      | Rarely: ventricular arrhythmias, conduction defects, cardiomyopathy with cardiac failure  |

- Chest X-ray allows the disease to be staged. High-resolution chest CT scan provides a better assessment of pulmonary involvement and identifies abnormal nodes for biopsy.
- Pulmonary function tests assess disease severity and the response to treatment. There is a restrictive lung defect in patients with pulmonary infiltration with a decrease in total lung capacity, FEV<sub>1</sub>, FVC and gas transfer.
- Blood tests – a full blood count, liver biochemistry, serum creatinine and calcium are performed to look for abnormalities and evidence of organ involvement. Serum angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) is raised in most patients but it has limited sensitivity and specificity and does not provide additional information to other tests in disease monitoring.
- Tuberculin test is negative in 80% of patients. It is of interest but of no diagnostic value.

## Differential diagnosis

The differential diagnosis of bilateral hilar lymphadenopathy includes:

- Lymphoma
- Pulmonary tuberculosis
- Bronchial carcinoma with secondary spread.

The combination of symmetrical bilateral hilar lymphadenopathy and erythema nodosum only occurs in sarcoidosis. Non-caseating granulomas also occur in lymphoma, fungal infection, tuberculosis (also caseating) and in response to foreign bodies and occupational exposure to beryllium.

## Management

Hilar lymphadenopathy with no other evidence of lung involvement on chest X-ray or lung function testing does not require treatment. The disease remits spontaneously within 2 years in over two-thirds of patients.

Infiltration or abnormal lung function tests that persist for 6 months after diagnosis is treated with 30 mg prednisolone for 6 weeks, reducing to 15 mg on alternate days for 6–12 months. Other definite indications for steroid treatment are hypercalcaemia, neurological or myocardial involvement and ocular involvement (topical steroids are used in some cases). Steroid sparing agents (methotrexate, azathioprine, cyclophosphamide) are sometimes used in patients needing long-term steroids for disease control.

## Prognosis

In patients of African origin the mortality rate may be up to 10%, but is less than 5% in Caucasians. Death is mainly as a result of respiratory failure or renal damage from hypercalciuria.

## Granulomatous lung disease with vasculitis

There are two main groups:

- Pulmonary vasculitis associated with primary autoimmune rheumatic diseases including rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus and systemic sclerosis (Ch. 7).
- The vasculitides associated with the presence of antineutrophil cytoplasmic antibodies (ANCA) including Churg–Strauss syndrome (p. 308), microscopic polyangiitis (p. 308) and Wegener’s granulomatosis.

Wegener’s granulomatosis is a vasculitis of unknown aetiology characterized by lesions involving the upper respiratory tract, the lungs and the kidneys. The disease often starts with rhinorrhoea, with subsequent nasal mucosal ulceration, cough, haemoptysis and pleuritic pain. Chest X-ray shows nodular masses or pneumonic infiltrates with cavitation which often show a migratory pattern. Antineutrophil cytoplasmic antibodies (p. 299) are found in the serum in over 90% of cases with active disease, and measurement is useful both diagnostically and as a guide to disease activity in the treated patient. Typical histological changes are best shown in the kidney, where there is a necrotizing microvascular glomerulonephritis. Treatment is with cyclophosphamide; rituximab is also being used.

## Idiopathic interstitial pneumonias

This group accounts for about 40% of cases of diffuse parenchymal lung disease and, as the name suggests, no underlying causes can be identified. Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (previously called cryptogenic fibrosing alveolitis) is the commonest type. Other types are non-specific interstitial pneumonitis, cryptogenic organizing pneumonia, acute interstitial pneumonia, desquamative interstitial pneumonia and respiratory bronchiolitis.

### Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF)

There is patchy fibrosis of the interstitium and minimal or absent inflammation, acute fibroblastic proliferation and collagen deposition. It usually presents in the late sixties and is more common in males.

### Clinical features

Presentation is with progressive breathlessness and a non-productive cough. Eventually there is respiratory failure, pulmonary hypertension and cor pulmonale. Finger clubbing occurs in two-thirds of cases, and fine inspiratory basal crackles are heard on auscultation. Rarely, an acute form known as the Hamman–Rich syndrome occurs.

### Investigations

- Chest X-ray appearances are initially of a ground-glass appearance, progressing to fibrosis and honeycomb lung. These changes are most prominent in the lower lung zones.
- High-resolution CT scan is the most sensitive imaging technique, and shows bilateral irregular linear opacities and honeycombing.
- Respiratory function tests show a restrictive defect (p. 509) with reduced lung volumes and impaired gas transfer.
- Blood gases show hypoxaemia with a normal  $P_a\text{CO}_2$ .
- Autoantibodies, such as antinuclear factor and rheumatoid factor, are present in one-third of patients.
- Histological confirmation is necessary in some patients. Transbronchial lung biopsy is rarely diagnostic but can exclude other conditions that present similarly, e.g. sarcoidosis. A video-assisted thoracoscopic lung biopsy is performed to obtain a larger specimen and a clear histological diagnosis.

### Differential diagnosis

This is from other causes of diffuse parenchymal lung disease (Fig 11.8). A detailed history, including occupational exposure (past and present) and drug history, is required to exclude other causes of pulmonary fibrosis.

## Treatment

Large doses of prednisolone are used (30 mg daily); azathioprine and cyclophosphamide may also be tried. Single lung transplantation is now an established treatment for some individuals.

## Prognosis

The median survival without lung transplantation is approximately 5 years.

## Hypersensitivity pneumonitis

This condition was previously called extrinsic allergic alveolitis and characterized by a widespread diffuse inflammatory reaction in the alveoli and small airways of the lung as a response to inhalation of organic dusts (Table 11.11). By far the most common is farmer's lung, which affects up to 1 in 10 of the farming community in poor wet areas around the world.

## Clinical features

There is fever, malaise, cough and shortness of breath several hours after exposure to the causative antigen. Physical examination reveals tachypnoea, and coarse end-inspiratory crackles and wheezes. Continuing exposure leads to a chronic illness with weight loss, effort dyspnoea, cough and the features of pulmonary fibrosis.

## Investigations

- Chest X-ray shows fluffy nodular shadowing with the subsequent development of streaky shadows, particularly in the upper zones.

**Table 11.11** Hypersensitivity pneumonitis – some causes

| Disease              | Situation   | Antigens  |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Farmer's lung        | Forking mouldy hay or other vegetable material                      | <i>Micropolyspora faeni</i>                             |
| Bird fancier's lung  | Handling pigeons, cleaning lofts or budgerigar cages                | Proteins present in feathers and excreta                |
| Malt worker's lung   | Turning germinating barley  | <i>Aspergillus clavatus</i>                             |
| Humidifier fever     | Contaminated humidifying systems in air conditioners or humidifiers | A variety of bacteria or amoebae                        |
| Mushroom workers     | Turning mushroom compost  | Thermophilic actinomycetes                              |
| Cheese washer's lung | Mouldy cheese   | <i>Penicillium casei</i><br><i>Aspergillus clavatus</i> |
| Wine maker's lung    | Mould on grapes   | Botrytis  |

- High-resolution CT shows reticular and nodular changes with ground-glass opacity.
- Full blood count shows a raised white cell count in acute cases.
- Lung function tests show a restrictive defect with a decrease in gas transfer.
- Precipitating antibodies to causative antigens are present in the serum (these are evidence of exposure and not disease).
- Bronchoalveolar lavage shows increased T lymphocytes and granulocytes.

## Management

Prevention is the aim, with avoidance of exposure to the antigen if possible. Prednisolone in large doses (30–60 mg daily) may be required to cause regression of the disease in the early stages.

### Other types of diffuse lung disease

Intrapulmonary haemorrhage can produce diffuse infiltrates on the chest X-ray. In Goodpasture's syndrome antibodies are directed against the basement membrane of both kidney and lung. There is cough, haemoptysis and tiredness followed by acute glomerulonephritis. Treatment is usually with corticosteroids. Diffuse alveolar haemorrhage is similar but tends to occur in children, the kidneys are less frequently involved and there are no anti-basement membrane antibodies. Other rarer causes of diffuse parenchymal lung disease are Langerhan's cell histiocytosis and pulmonary alveolar proteinosis.

## OCCUPATIONAL LUNG DISEASE

Exposure to dusts, gases, vapours and fumes at work can lead to the following types of lung disease:

- Acute bronchitis and pulmonary oedema from irritants such as sulphur dioxide, chlorine, ammonia or oxides of nitrogen
- Pulmonary fibrosis from inhalation of inorganic dust, e.g. coal, silica, asbestos, iron and tin
- Occupational asthma – this is the commonest industrial lung disease in the developed world
- Hypersensitivity pneumonitis
- Bronchial carcinoma due to asbestos, polycyclic hydrocarbons and radon in mines.

### Coal worker's pneumoconiosis

Small coal particles escape the normal clearance mechanisms of the airways (trapped in the nose, removed by the mucociliary clearance system, destroyed

by alveolar macrophages) to reach the acinus and initiate an inflammatory reaction and subsequent fibrosis. Improved working conditions and reduction in the coal industry has led to a considerable reduction in the number of cases of pneumoconiosis. Simple pneumoconiosis produces small pulmonary nodules on the chest X-ray; there is considerable debate as to whether this has any effect on respiratory function and symptoms. However, with continued exposure there may be progression to progressive massive fibrosis characterized by large (1–10 cm) fibrotic masses, predominantly in the upper lobes. Unlike simple pneumoconiosis, the disease may progress after exposure to coal dust has ceased. Symptoms are breathlessness and cough productive of black sputum. Eventually respiratory failure may supervene. There is no specific treatment and further exposure must be prevented. Patients with PMF and some with simple pneumoconiosis (depending on the severity of radiological changes) are eligible for disability benefit in the UK.

## Asbestosis

Asbestos is a mixture of fibrous silicates which have the common properties of resistance to heat, acid and alkali, hence their widespread use at one time. Chrysotile or white asbestos constitutes 90% of the world production and is less fibrogenic than the other forms – crocidolite (blue asbestos) and amosite (brown asbestos). Most people with asbestos related lung disease have a clear history of occupational exposure such as fitting or working with asbestos insulation (builders, plumbers and electricians), shipyard workers or ship engineering workers. The diseases caused by asbestos (Table 11.12) are all characterized by a long latency period (20–40 years) between exposure and disease. Diagnosis of asbestos related lung disease is made on the basis of the history of exposure and typical chest X-ray appearances. High resolution CT scanning, lung function testing and pleural biopsy are sometimes needed.

## CARCINOMA OF THE LUNG

### Epidemiology

Bronchial carcinoma accounts for 95% of primary lung tumours. The rest are benign tumours and rarer types of cancers, e.g. alveolar cell carcinoma. Bronchial carcinoma is the most common malignant tumour in the Western world, and in the UK is the third most common cause of death after heart disease and pneumonia. There is a 3:1 male:female ratio, but although the rising mortality of this disease has levelled off in men, it continues to rise in women.

### Aetiology

Smoking is by far the most common aetiological factor, although there is a higher incidence in urban areas than in rural areas even when allowances

**Table 11.12** The effects of asbestos on the lung

| Disease                            | Pathology and clinical features  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Asbestos bodies                    | No symptoms or change in lung function<br>Serve only as a marker of exposure   |
| Pleural plaques                    | Fibrotic plaques on parietal and diaphragmatic pleura<br>Usually produce no symptoms   |
| Pleural effusion                   | Pleural biopsy often needed to differentiate from malignant effusion<br>Pleuritic pain and dyspnoea  |
| Diffuse pleural thickening*        | Thickening of parietal and visceral pleura<br>Effort dyspnoea and restrictive ventilatory defect   |
| Mesothelioma*                      | Tumour arising from mesothelial cells of pleura, peritoneum and pericardium<br>Often presents with dull diffuse progressive chest pain and a pleural effusion<br>Treatment is with chemotherapy or debulking procedures. Prognosis is poor |
| Asbestosis*                        | Breathlessness, finger clubbing, bilateral inspiratory crackles<br>Pulmonary function tests show a restrictive ventilatory defect  |
| Lung cancer, often adenocarcinoma* | Presentation and treatment is that of lung cancer (see below)  |

*\*The diseases indicated are all eligible for compensation under the Social Security Act of 1975 (UK)*

are made for smoking. Other aetiological factors are passive smoking, exposure to asbestos and, possibly, also contact with arsenic, chromium, iron oxides and the products of coal combustion.

## Pathology

This is broadly divided into small cell and non-small cell cancer (Table 11.13).

## Clinical features

**Local effects of tumour within a bronchus** Cough, chest pain, haemoptysis and breathlessness are typical symptoms.



**Table 11.13** Types of bronchial carcinoma (indicates % lung carcinomas)

| Cell type                  | Characteristics   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Non-small cell</b>      |   |
| Squamous (40%)             | Most present as obstructive lesion leading to infection   |
|                            | Occasionally cavitates                                    |
|                            | Local spread common                                       |
|                            | Widespread metastases occur late                          |
| Large cell (25%)           | Poorly differentiated tumour                              |
|                            | Metastasize early   |
| Adenocarcinoma (10%)       | Most common lung cancer associated with asbestos exposure |
|                            | Proportionately more common in non-smokers                |
|                            | Usually occurs peripherally                               |
|                            | Local and distant metastases                              |
| <b>Small cell (20–30%)</b> |   |
|                            | Arises from endocrine cells (Kulchitsky cells)            |
|                            | Secretes polypeptide hormones (Table 11.14)               |
|                            | Early development of widespread metastases                |
|                            | Responds to chemotherapy. Poor prognosis                  |

**Spread within the chest** Tumour may directly involve the pleura and ribs, causing pain and bone fractures. Spread to involve the brachial plexus causes pain in the shoulder and inner arm (Pancoast's tumour), spread to the sympathetic ganglion causes Horner's syndrome (p. 730), and spread to the left recurrent laryngeal nerve causes hoarseness and a bovine cough. In addition, the tumour may directly involve the oesophagus, heart or superior vena cava (causing upper limb oedema, facial congestion and distended neck veins).

**Metastatic disease** Metastases are most commonly to bone (presenting with pain and sometimes spinal cord compression) and brain (change in personality, epilepsy, focal neurological signs).

**Non-metastatic manifestations** These are rare apart from finger clubbing (Table 11.14). There may, in addition, be non-specific features such as malaise, lethargy and weight loss.

On examination of the chest there are often no physical signs, although lymphadenopathy signs of a pleural effusion, lobar collapse or unresolved pneumonia may be present.

**Table 11.14** Non-metastatic extrapulmonary manifestations of bronchial carcinoma

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Endocrine                          | Ectopic secretion of:<br>ACTH causing Cushing's syndrome<br>ADH causing dilutional hyponatraemia<br>PTH-like substance causing hypercalcaemia<br>HCG or related hormones resulting in gynaecomastia |
| Neurological                       | Cerebellar degeneration   |
|                                    | Myopathy, polyneuropathies  |
|                                    | Myasthenic syndrome (Eaton–Lambert syndrome)  |
| Vascular/<br>haematological (rare) | Thrombophlebitis migrans  |
|                                    | Non-bacterial thrombotic endocarditis   |
|                                    | Disseminated intravascular coagulation  |
|                                    | Anaemia   |
| Skeletal                           | Clubbing  |
|                                    | Hypertrophic pulmonary osteoarthropathy (clubbing, painful wrists and ankles)   |
| Cutaneous (rare)                   | Dermatomyositis   |
|                                    | Acanthosis nigricans (pigmented overgrowth of skin in axillae or groin)   |
|                                    | Herpes zoster   |

## Investigations

The aim of investigation is to confirm the diagnosis, determine the histology and assess tumour spread as a guide to treatment.

**Confirm the diagnosis** The chest X-ray will usually be abnormal by the time a lung cancer is causing symptoms. Tumours usually appear as a round shadow, the edge of which often has a fluffy or spiked appearance. There may be evidence of cavitation, lobar collapse, a pleural effusion or secondary pneumonia. Spread through the lymphatic channels gives rise to lymphangitis carcinomatosa, appearing as streaky shadowing throughout the lung. A minority of tumours is confined to the central airways and mediastinum without an obvious change on chest X-ray and in patients with suspicious symptoms, e.g. a smoker with haemoptysis, bronchoscopy or CT scanning is necessary to make the diagnosis.

**Determine the histology** Sputum is examined by a cytologist for malignant cells. Bronchoscopy is used to obtain biopsies for histological investigation and washings for cytology. Transthoracic fine needle aspiration biopsy

under radiographic or CT screening is useful for obtaining tissue diagnosis from peripheral lesions.

**Assess spread of the tumour** At bronchoscopy involvement of the first 2 cm of either main bronchus or of the recurrent laryngeal nerve (vocal cord paresis) indicates inoperability. Patients being considered for surgery should have a CT of the thorax to include the liver and adrenal glands to assess the mediastinum and the extent of tumour spread. PET scanning (p. 828) is the investigation of choice for confirmation or exclusion of intrathoracic lymph nodes metastases and is used when available to assess suitability for surgery.

**Determine patient suitability for major operation** Physical examination and respiratory function tests.

## Treatment

Treatment of lung cancer involves several different modalities and is best planned by a multidisciplinary team.

### Non-small-cell lung cancer

- Surgery can be curative in non-small-cell cancer. Neo-adjuvant chemotherapy may downstage tumours to render them operable. Adjuvant postoperative chemotherapy and radiotherapy improves survival.
- Radiotherapy in high doses can produce good results in patients with localized squamous carcinoma if surgery is declined. Complications are radiation pneumonitis and fibrosis. Palliative radiotherapy is useful for bone pain, haemoptysis and superior vena cava obstruction (p. 255).
- Chemotherapy is given in advanced disease and improves median survival from 6 to 10 months.

### Small-cell lung cancer

Limited disease (confined to a single anatomical or radiation field) is treated with combined chemo- and radiotherapy with 25% survival at 5 years.

Extensive disease is treated with chemotherapy with a median survival of 9–13 months and 2 year survival of 20%.

## Symptomatic treatments

Local treatments such as endoscopic laser therapy, endobronchial irradiation and transbronchial stenting are used to treat distressing symptoms arising from airway narrowing. Malignant pleural effusions should be aspirated to dryness and a sclerosing agent (e.g. tetracycline, bleomycin) instilled into the pleural space. In the terminal stages, the quality of life must be maintained as far as possible. In addition to general nursing, counselling and medical

care, patients may need oral or intravenous opiates for pain (given with laxatives to prevent constipation), and prednisolone may improve the appetite.

## Differential diagnosis

In most cases the diagnosis is straightforward. The differential diagnosis is usually from other solitary nodules on the chest X-ray (Table 11.3).

### Metastatic tumours in the lung

Metastases in the lung are common, usually presenting as round shadows 1.5–3 cm in diameter. The most common primary sites are the kidney, prostate, breast, bone, gastrointestinal tract, cervix or ovary.

## DISEASES OF THE CHEST WALL AND PLEURA

### Rib fractures

Rib fractures are caused by trauma, coughing, osteoporosis or secondary to metastatic bone disease. Pain limits chest expansion and coughing which can lead to pneumonia. Lateral and oblique X-rays may show fractures not visible on a PA chest X-ray. Treatment is with oral analgesia, local infiltration or an intercostal nerve block. Fracture of a rib in more than one place can lead to a flail segment with paradoxical movement of part of the chest wall on inspiration and inefficient ventilation; intermittent positive pressure ventilation may be necessary.

### Kyphosis and scoliosis of the spine

Kyphosis describes bowing of the thoracic spine ('humpback') and is congenital or secondary to osteoporosis and vertebral fractures. Scoliosis describes a curved spine ('s' shaped) and is congenital or secondary to neuromuscular disease, e.g. spina bifida. Kyphoscoliosis is a combination of kyphosis and scoliosis. If severe these spinal abnormalities may diminish lung capacity. Treatment is to correct the spinal deformity if possible. Positive airway pressure ventilation through a tightly fitting nasal mask is necessary for respiratory failure.

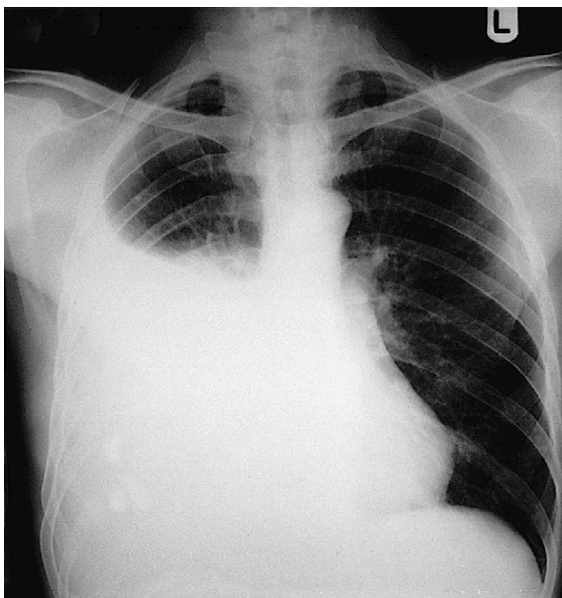
### Pleurisy

Inflammation of the pleura without an effusion results in localized sharp pain made worse on deep inspiration, coughing and bending or twisting movements. Common causes are pneumonia, pulmonary infarct and carcinoma. Epidemic myalgia (Bornholm disease) is due to infection with Coxsackie B virus. It is characterized by an upper respiratory tract infection followed by

pleuritic pain and abdominal pain with tender muscles. The chest X-ray remains normal and the illness clears in 1 week.

## Pleural effusion

A pleural effusion is an excessive accumulation of fluid in the pleural space. It can be detected clinically when there is 500 mL or more present, and by plain chest X-ray when there is more than 300 mL. Massive effusions are most commonly malignant in origin. A pleural effusion may be asymptomatic (if small) or cause breathlessness. The typical physical signs and chest X-ray appearances are shown in Figure 11.9.



**Fig. 11.9** The chest radiographic appearances of a pleural effusion. With a large effusion there is a dense homogenous shadow occupying part of the hemithorax and a meniscus visible on an erect chest X-ray.

Physical signs on the affected side:

- Reduced chest wall movement
- Dull ('stony dull') to percussion
- Absent breath sounds
- Reduced vocal resonance
- Mediastinum shifted away.

## Aetiology

Pleural effusions are transudates or exudates (Table 11.15). Transudates occur when the balance of hydrostatic forces in the chest favour the accumulation of pleural fluid; occasionally they occur because of movement of fluid from the peritoneum or retroperitoneal space. Exudates occur with damaged or altered pleura (resulting in loss of tissue fluid and protein) or from impaired lymphatic drainage of the pleural space. Differentiation of transudate from exudate is the key to subsequent management; treatment for a transudative effusion is that of the underlying disease while treatment of an exudate often requires specific pleural intervention. More rarely, effusions consist of blood (haemothorax), pus (empyema, p. 540) or lymph (chylothorax). Chylous effusions are caused by leakage of lymph from the thoracic duct as a result of trauma or infiltration by carcinoma.

## Investigations

**Diagnostic pleural fluid aspiration** is the initial investigation, unless the clinical picture clearly suggests a transudate, e.g. left ventricular failure. Small effusions or where initial 'blind' aspiration is unsuccessful require

**Table 11.15** Causes of a pleural effusion

| Transudate   | Exudate   |
|--|---|
| Pleural fluid protein <30 g/L*                                   | Pleural fluid protein >30 g/L*  |
| <b>Common</b>  |   |
| Heart failure  | Infection (empyema/parapneumonic effusion/TB)   |
| Hypoalbuminaemia, e.g. nephrotic syndrome, cirrhosis             | Malignancy (primary and secondary)  |
| Constrictive pericarditis  | Pulmonary embolus with infarction   |
| Hypothyroidism   | Connective tissue disease   |
| Ovarian fibroma producing right sided effusion (Meigs' syndrome) | Rare causes (post-myocardial infarction syndrome, acute pancreatitis, mesothelioma, sarcoidosis, chylothorax, drugs, e.g. methotrexate, amiodarone) |

\*if pleural fluid protein is 25–35 g/L or serum protein level is abnormal apply Light's criteria (for which simultaneous sampling of venous blood for protein and LDH is required):

- pleural fluid protein/serum protein > 0.5
  - pleural fluid LDH/serum LDH > 0.6
  - pleural fluid LDH > two-thirds of the upper limit of normal serum LDH.
- One or more of above suggest an exudate.

image guidance – usually ultrasound. Large effusions causing breathlessness are initially managed with large volume thoracocentesis (e.g. 1 L) for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. Appearance of the pleural fluid is noted (purulent in empyema, turbid in infected effusion, milky in chylothorax) and the sample sent for protein, lactate dehydrogenase (LDH), glucose, pH (<7.3 suggests infection), cytology (differential white cell count and malignant cells) and microbiology (Gram stain and culture after inoculating into blood culture bottles, acid-fast bacilli stain and culture) if infection is suspected. Cytology may be negative in a malignant effusion. Occasionally amylase is measured in suspected pancreatitis-associated effusion and a lipid profile in suspected chylothorax.

**Contrast-enhanced thoracic CT scan** is performed if diagnostic aspiration does not provide a diagnosis. It is most useful when pleural fluid is still present as this improves the contrast between pleural abnormality and fluid. CT scanning allows identification of pleural nodularity and image-guided needle biopsy of any focal area of abnormality.

**Pleural biopsy** for tissue diagnosis (TB smear, culture and histology) is obtained by CT guided biopsy, blind biopsy (via an Abram's needle) or video assisted thoracoscopic approach that allows multiple biopsies to be taken under direct visualization.

## Management

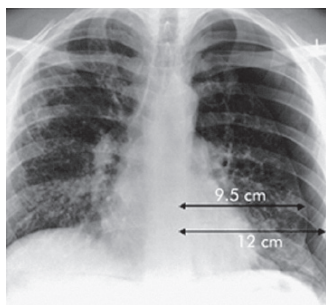
This depends on the underlying cause. Exudates are usually drained, and transudates are managed by treatment of the underlying cause. Malignant effusions usually reaccumulate after drainage. They can be treated by aspiration to dryness followed by instillation into the pleural space of a sclerosing agent such as talc, tetracycline or bleomycin.

## Pneumothorax

Pneumothorax is air in the pleural space leading to partial or complete collapse of the lung and occurs spontaneously or secondary to chest trauma. A 'tension pneumothorax' is rare unless the patient is on a mechanical ventilator or nasal non-invasive ventilation. In this situation the pleural tear acts as a one-way valve through which air passes during inspiration but is unable to exit on expiration. There is a unilateral increase in intrapleural pressure with increasing respiratory distress and eventually shock and cardiorespiratory arrest. Treatment is immediate decompression by needle thoracocentesis (2nd intercostal space, mid-clavicular line) and then intercostal tube drainage.

## Aetiology

Spontaneous pneumothorax typically occurs in young men (typically tall and thin) and is the result of rupture of a pleural bleb which is thought to be due



Volume of pneumothorax  
 $(12^3 - 9.5^3) / 12^3 = 50\%$

**Fig. 11.10** The chest radiographic appearances of a pneumothorax.

- The visceral-pleura line (marked by the right hand top arrowhead)
- Loss of pulmonary markings over the left lung
- Mediastinum is shifted away from the pneumothorax and diaphragm on the same side is pushed downwards with large pneumothoraces.

The size of a pneumothorax is estimated by measuring the distance from the lateral edge of the lung to the inner wall of the ribs. A distance  $>2$  cm implies that the pneumothorax is at least 50%, and hence large in size. (From Henry M, Arnold T, Harvey J on behalf of the BTS Pleural Disease Group. *BTS guidelines for the management of spontaneous pneumothorax*. Thorax 2003; 58 (Suppl ii): ii39–52 with permission of the BMJ Publishing Group & British Thoracic Society.)

to a congenital defect in the connective tissue of the alveolar wall. Secondary pneumothorax is associated with underlying lung disease, usually COPD.

## Clinical features

There is a sudden onset of pleuritic chest pain and breathlessness. With a large pneumothorax there are reduced breath sounds and hyperresonant percussion on examination.

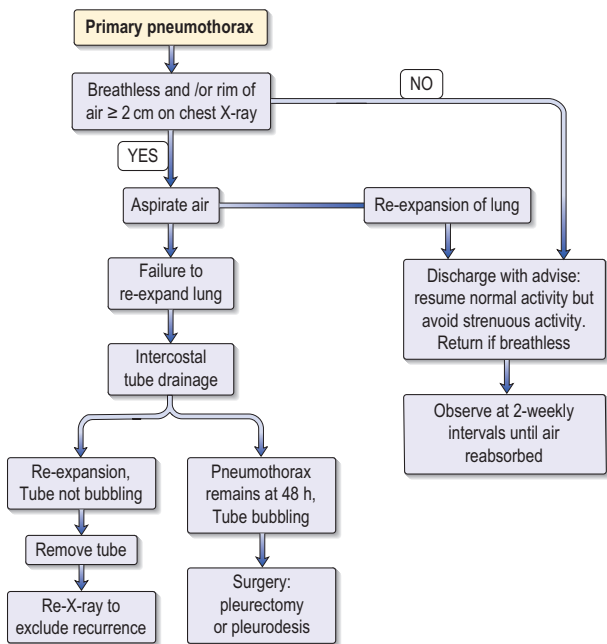
## Investigations

A standard PA chest X-ray (Fig. 11.10) will usually confirm the diagnosis. In patients with severe bullous lung disease CT scanning will differentiate emphysematous bullae from pneumothoraces and save the patient a potentially dangerous needle aspiration. CT will also detect pneumothoraces too small to be visible on chest X-ray.

## Management

Management of a spontaneous primary pneumothorax is shown in Figure 11.11. The management of patients with secondary pneumothoraces differs in four respects:





**Fig. 11.11** Treatment of a primary spontaneous pneumothorax. All patients admitted to hospital should receive high-flow oxygen (10 L/min) to increase absorption of air from the pleural cavity.

- Patients remain in hospital
- Attempt aspiration only in minimally breathless patients, <50 years old with small pneumothoraces
- Chest drain insertion indicated in all other patients
- Oxygen given via a fixed-performance mask to patients with COPD (p. 521).

Indications for surgical referral in patients with pneumothorax include persistent air leaks, recurrent pneumothorax and after a first pneumothorax in professions at risk (pilots, divers). Cessation of smoking reduces the recurrence rate. All patients are advised not to fly for 2 weeks after successful treatment of a pneumothorax.

## DISORDERS OF THE DIAPHRAGM

Unilateral diaphragmatic paralysis is usually asymptomatic and discovered incidentally on patients having imaging for some other reason. The

commonest cause is involvement of the phrenic nerve (C2–C4) in the thorax by a bronchial carcinoma. Chest X-ray shows an elevated hemidiaphragm on the affected side and the diagnosis is made on fluoroscopy (the diaphragm moves paradoxically upward during inspiration). Bilateral diaphragmatic weakness causes orthopnoea, paradoxical (inward) movement of the abdominal wall on inspiration and a large fall in FVC on lying down. Causes include trauma or generalized muscular or neurological conditions (motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy, Guillain–Barré syndrome). Treatment is either diaphragmatic pacing or night-time assisted ventilation.

## THERAPEUTICS

Most drugs described in this section are used in the management of asthma and COPD. Drug inhalation delivers the drug directly to the airways; the dose is smaller than that for the drugs given by mouth, and side-effects are reduced. Metered-dose inhalers (MDI) are the method of first choice for drug delivery. An MDI with a spacer device removes the need to coordinate actuation of an MDI and inhalation, and may improve drug delivery for patients who have difficulty using a pressurized MDI. They increase airway drug deposition and reduce oropharyngeal deposition. Local adverse effects from inhaled corticosteroids, e.g. oropharyngeal candidiasis, are reduced and a spacer device should be co-prescribed with inhaled corticosteroids for children, patients on high doses and those with poor inhaler technique. Breath-activated inhalers or dry powder inhalers are also available. A nebulizer converts a solution of a drug into an aerosol for inhalation and delivers a higher dose of drug than is usual with standard inhalers. Nebulizers are used in the management of acute severe asthma, chronic persistent asthma and brittle asthma.

## Bronchodilators

### Short-acting selective $\beta_2$ -adrenoceptor stimulants

#### Mechanism of action

Interact with  $\beta$ -receptors on the surface of a variety of cells and lead to bronchial smooth muscle relaxation, decrease release of mediators from mast cells, inhibit neutrophil and eosinophil functional responses and increase mucociliary transport.

#### Indications

Inhalers used on an as required basis for relief of symptoms in mild asthma and on an as required or regular basis in COPD. Oral preparations are used by patients who cannot manage the inhaled route, and the intravenous route is used for acute severe asthma. In asthma patients using an inhaler on a

daily basis, regular inhaled preventative corticosteroid treatment is given (Fig. 11.4).

## Preparations and dose

**Salbutamol** *By inhaler (MDI): 100 µg/puff; Breath-actuated inhaler: 100 µg/puff; Tablets: 2 mg, 4 mg; Oral solution: 2 mg/5 mL; Nebules: 2.5 mg/2.5 mL, 5 mg/2.5 mL; For infusion: 5 mg/5 mL.*

**Inhaled** MDI or breath-actuated inhaler: one to two puffs inhaled when required up to three to four times daily.

**Oral** 4 mg three to four times daily. Elderly and sensitive patients 2 mg initially.

**Nebules** 2.5–5 mg inhalation of nebulized solution, repeated according to clinical need.

**IV infusion** Add 5 mg in 5 mL to a 500 mL bag of sodium chloride 0.9% or glucose 5%, to give a 10 µg/mL solution. Infuse at a rate of 5 µg per minute and adjust according to response. Usual maintenance: 3–20 µg/min.

**Terbutaline** *Inhaler: 250 µg/puff; Dry powder inhaler: 500 µg/inhalation; Injection: 500 µg/mL.*

**Inhaled**

- One to two puffs of inhaler when required up to three to four times daily
- One inhalation of dry powder inhaler when required up to four times daily.

**IV** 250–500 µg up to four times daily. Give i.v. over 1–2 minutes or dilute 1.5–2.5 mg in 500 mL glucose 5% and give as a continuous infusion at a rate of 1.5–5 µg/min for 8–10 hours.

## Side-effects

Fine tremor, tachycardia, palpitations, headache, disturbances of sleep. Hypokalaemia with high doses (monitor plasma potassium in severe asthma).

## Cautions/contraindications

Caution in untreated/poorly controlled hyperthyroidism, arrhythmias.

## Long-acting selective inhaled $\beta_2$ -adrenoceptor stimulants (LABA)

### Mechanism of action

See short-acting selective  $\beta_2$ -adrenoceptor stimulants.

## Indications

LABA are added to existing inhaled corticosteroid therapy to prevent asthma attacks (Fig. 10.4). They are not used for an acute asthma attack. They are also used in COPD without inhaled corticosteroids.

## Preparations and dose

**Salmeterol** *Metered-dose inhaler: 25 µg/puff.*

Two puffs inhaled twice daily.

Accuhaler (dry powder for inhalation): 50 µg/blister.

1 blister twice daily.

Diskhaler (dry powder for inhalation): 50 µg/blister.

1 blister twice daily.

**Formoterol (eformoterol)** *dry powder: 6 and 12 µg/inhalation.*

6–24 µg inhaled twice daily.

## Side-effects

As above.

## Cautions/contraindications

As above.

## Antimuscarinic bronchodilators

### Mechanism of action

Ipratropium (short acting) and tiotropium (long acting) antagonize the actions of acetylcholine by competition at the type 3 muscarinic receptor ( $M_3$ ) site located on airway smooth muscle. Antagonism of acetylcholine results in airway smooth muscle relaxation and bronchodilatation.

## Indications

Ipratropium is used when there is a poor response to  $\beta$ -agonists and steroid in the emergency treatment of acute severe asthma. Antimuscarinics are not usually used as first-line bronchodilators to treat chronic asthma. Ipratropium is used for short-term relief of symptoms in COPD and tiotropium for maintenance treatment.

## Preparations and dose

**Ipratropium bromide** *Metered-dose inhaler: 20 and 40 µg/puff.*

20–80 µg inhaled three to four times daily.

Aerocaps (dry powder for inhalation): 40 µg.

20–80 µg inhaled three to four times daily.

Nebules: 250 µg/mL.

100–500 µg inhaled up to four times daily.

**Tiotropium bromide** *Dry powder for inhalation: 18 µg.*

18 µg inhaled once daily.

## Side-effects

Dry mouth, nausea, constipation, tachycardia, headache, acute angle-closure glaucoma.

## Cautions/contraindications

Use with caution in patients with myasthenia gravis, narrow-angle glaucoma (protect patient's eyes from nebulized drug), benign prostatic hypertrophy, bladder neck obstruction.

## Theophylline

### Mechanism of action

Inhibits phosphodiesterase-mediated hydrolysis and leads to an increase in intracellular concentration of cyclic nucleotides in airway smooth muscle and inflammatory cells. This in turn leads to smooth muscle relaxation and bronchodilatation. Theophylline also has anti-inflammatory/immunomodulatory and bronchoprotective effects that may be mediated by other molecular mechanisms.

### Indications

It is used occasionally:

- In acute exacerbations of COPD
- In patients with chronic asthma whose asthma is not adequately controlled with inhaled corticosteroids. A single dose at night can help control nocturnal asthma and early morning wheezing.

### Preparations and dose

Aminophylline is a mixture of theophylline and ethylenediamine; the ethylenediamine confers greater solubility in water.

**Theophylline** *SR capsules: 60 mg, 125 mg, 250 mg.*

250–500 mg every 12 hours.

*SR tablets: 200 mg, 300 mg, 400 mg.*

200 mg every 12 hours, increased after 1 week to 300 mg every 12 hours.

Patients over 70 kg: 200–300 mg every 12 hours, increased after 1 week to 400 mg every 12 hours.

**Aminophylline** *Tablets: 100 mg; SR tablets: 225 mg; Injection: 250 mg/10 mL.*

**Oral** 100–300 mg three to four times daily, or SR 225–450 mg twice daily.

**IV with cardiac monitoring** Loading dose 5 mg/kg (250–500 mg) over 20 minutes and then maintenance dose of 0.5 mg/kg/hour (add 500 mg to 250–500 mL sodium chloride 0.9% or glucose 5%). Plasma theophylline levels are measured daily to maintain concentration of 10–20 mg/L (55–110  $\mu\text{mol/L}$ ). In patients already taking oral theophylline omit the loading dose and check plasma levels before starting the maintenance infusion.

### Side-effects

Tachycardia, palpitations, nausea and other gastrointestinal disturbances, headache, CNS stimulation, insomnia, arrhythmias and convulsions

especially if given rapidly by intravenous infusion. There is a narrow margin between therapeutic and toxic dose.

### Cautions/contraindications

All modified-release theophylline preparations should be prescribed by brand name as the bioavailability between different brands may vary. Plasma theophylline concentration should be monitored in patients on oral therapy (8–12 hours after the last dose) and on intravenous treatment for longer than 24 hours (stop infusion for 15 minutes before taking the blood sample). Plasma theophylline concentration for optimum response 10–20 mg/L (55–110  $\mu\text{mol/L}$ ).

Theophylline is metabolized in the liver; there is considerable variation in plasma-theophylline concentration particularly in smokers, in patients with hepatic impairment or heart failure, or if certain drugs are taken concurrently – check *National Formulary* for details.

### Intravenous magnesium sulphate

#### Mechanism of action

Relaxation of bronchial smooth muscle leading to bronchodilatation.

#### Indications

A single dose of i.v. magnesium sulphate is given to patients with acute severe asthma, life-threatening or near fatal asthma (Emergency Box 11.1).

#### Preparations and dose

**Magnesium sulphate** 50% ( $\text{Mg}^{2+}$  approx. 2 mmol/mL): 2 mL (1 g), 5 mL (2.5 g), 10 mL (5 g) ampoule.

**IV** (Magnesium sulphate concentration should not exceed 20%; dilute 1 part of magnesium sulphate injection 50% with at least 1.5 parts of water for injection.) 1.2–2 g i.v. infusion over 20 minutes.

#### Side-effects

Nausea, vomiting, flushing, hypotension, arrhythmias, drowsiness and muscle weakness.

### Cautions/contraindications

Profound hypotension reported with concomitant use of calcium-channel blockers.

## Corticosteroids

#### Mechanism of action

The precise beneficial mechanism in asthma is not known. Corticosteroids induce the synthesis of inhibitory factor kappa B (I $\kappa$ B), a protein that traps

and thereby inactivates nuclear factor kappa B. The latter protein activates cytokine genes, and thus steroids inhibit the synthesis of most cytokines. Steroids reduce airway inflammation and hence reduce oedema and secretion of mucus into the airway. Compound preparations that contain an inhaled corticosteroid and a long-acting  $\beta_2$  agonist (e.g. budesonide with formoterol) are used for patients stabilized on the individual components.

## Indications

**Inhaled** For prophylactic treatment of asthma when patients are using a  $\beta_2$ -agonist more than once daily. In patients with COPD who have an improvement in lung function after a trial of oral corticosteroids.

**Oral** Acute severe asthma and in patients with chronic asthma when the response to other anti-asthma drugs is small.

**Parenteral** Acute severe asthma.

## Preparations and dose

**Beclometasone** *Metered-dose inhaler: 50, 100, 200, 250  $\mu\text{g}/\text{puff}$ .*

200  $\mu\text{g}$  inhaled twice daily, or for more severe cases up to 800  $\mu\text{g}$  daily may be used.

*Breath-activated inhaler: 50, 100, 250  $\mu\text{g}/\text{puff}$ .*

200  $\mu\text{g}$  inhaled twice daily, or for more severe cases up to 800  $\mu\text{g}$  daily may be used.

*Dry powder for inhalation: 100, 200, 400  $\mu\text{g}/\text{puff}$ .*

400  $\mu\text{g}$  inhaled twice daily.

**Budesonide** *Metered-dose inhaler: 50, 200  $\mu\text{g}/\text{puff}$ .*

50  $\mu\text{g}$  inhaled twice daily, or for more severe cases up to 400  $\mu\text{g}$  twice daily.

*Turbohaler® (dry powder): 100, 200, 400  $\mu\text{g}/\text{inhalation}$ .*

100–800  $\mu\text{g}$  inhaled twice daily.

**Fluticasone** *Metered-dose inhaler: 50, 125, 250  $\mu\text{g}/\text{puff}$ .*

100–200  $\mu\text{g}$  inhaled twice daily, increased up to 1 mg twice daily when necessary. Higher doses initiated by a specialist.

*Dry powder for inhalation: 50, 100, 250, 500  $\mu\text{g}/\text{blister}$ .*

100–200  $\mu\text{g}$  inhaled twice daily, increased up to 1 mg twice daily when necessary. Higher doses initiated by a specialist.

**Oral** See page 663.

**IV** See page 663.

## Side-effects

The adverse effects of oral corticosteroids are listed on page 665. Inhaled corticosteroids have far fewer side-effects than oral corticosteroids but adverse effects are reported. Hoarseness and oropharyngeal candidiasis are

reduced by rinsing the mouth with water after inhalation of a dose and/or by using a spacer device. Higher doses of inhaled corticosteroids have the potential to induce adrenal suppression, and patients on high doses should be given a 'steroid card' and may also need corticosteroid cover during an operation or illness. High doses may also reduce bone mineral density and the dose should be reduced when asthma control is good. There is a small increased risk of glaucoma.

### **Cautions/contraindications**

Caution with inhaled corticosteroids in active or quiescent tuberculosis. Paradoxical bronchospasm may be prevented (if mild) by inhalation of a  $\beta_2$ -agonist before corticosteroid treatment.



# Intensive care medicine

Intensive care medicine (or 'critical care medicine') is concerned mainly with the management of patients with acute life-threatening conditions ('the critically ill') in a specialized unit. It also encompasses the resuscitation and transport of those who become acutely ill, or are injured, either elsewhere in the hospital or in the community. An intensive care unit (ICU) has the facilities and expertise to provide cardiorespiratory support to these sick patients, some of whom also have kidney or liver failure, and management of this is described in the relevant chapters.

All patients admitted to the ICU require skilled nursing care (patient to nurse ratio of 1 : 1) and physiotherapy. Many require nutritional support and the enteral route should be used where possible (p. 124). General medical management includes management of pain and distress with analgesics and sedation as necessary, the prevention of venous thrombosis, pressure sores and constipation, and insulin infusions to normalize blood sugar. H<sub>2</sub>-receptor antagonists are indicated in certain high-risk individuals to prevent stress-induced peptic ulceration. A number of scoring systems, such as the Acute Physiology and Chronic Health Evaluation (APACHE) score, are in use to evaluate the severity of the patient's illness and progress.

High dependency units (HDUs) offer a level of care intermediate between that available on the general ward and that provided in an ICU. They provide monitoring and support for patients with acute (or acute on chronic) single organ failure and for those who are at risk of developing organ failure, including facilities for short-term ventilatory support and immediate resuscitation. They can also provide a 'step-down' facility for patients being discharged from intensive care.

## Patient selection – withholding and withdrawing treatment

It is essential that only those patients who are likely to benefit from intensive care are admitted to the unit. For some critically ill patients admission to ITU is inappropriate because prognosis is clearly hopeless and admission to ITU

will simply prolong the process of dying, prolong their suffering and that of their relatives and take up limited resources without benefit. A decision not to admit a patient to ITU is based on their previous health and quality of life, the primary diagnosis and the prognosis of the underlying condition. These decisions should be made in conjunction with the medical and nursing staff, the patient and relatives and documented in the medical records.

### Critical care outreach and early warning systems

Within an acute hospital there are patients on general wards who are 'at risk' and deteriorating who may require care above the 'general level'. Prompt recognition of these patients and institution of expert treatment will often prevent their progression to severe illness. Critical care outreach is an organizational approach to ensure high-quality care for these patients. Outreach services have three aims:

- Avert admissions to ITU or ensure that admissions are timely, by early identification of patients who are deteriorating
- Enable discharges from ITU by supporting the continued recovery of discharged patients, and their relatives, on wards and after discharge from hospital
- To share critical care skills with staff on the ward and in the community.

Terminal cardiovascular, neurological or respiratory collapse is often preceded by a period of abnormal basic physiological observations during which time potential life-saving therapeutic interventions may be initiated. The Modified Early Warning Score (MEWS, Table 12.1) is a cumulative score based on routine ward observations which acts as a 'tracker' to 'flag up' patients who should be given immediate priority. Hospital protocols vary but in general a MEWS score of 4 or more indicates the need for urgent medical review and assessment and this will in some cases result in ITU admission.

### ACUTE DISTURBANCES OF HAEMODYNAMIC FUNCTION (SHOCK)

The term 'shock' is used to describe acute circulatory failure with inadequate or inappropriately distributed tissue perfusion resulting in decreased oxygen delivery to the tissues. The effects of inadequate tissue perfusion are initially reversible but prolonged oxygen deprivation leads to critical derangement of cell processes and eventually cell necrosis, end-organ failure and death. Thus the prompt recognition and treatment of shock is essential. The causes of shock are listed in Table 12.2. Shock is often the result of a combination of these factors, e.g. in sepsis distributive shock is frequently complicated by hypovolaemia and myocardial depression.

**Table 12.1** Modified early warning score

| Score   | 3                | 2                  | 1      | 0         | 1                 | 2                | 3            |
|---|------------------|--------------------|--------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| RR  |                  | ≤8                 |        | 9–14      | 15–20             | 21–29            | >29          |
| HR  |                  | ≤40                | 41–50  | 51–100    | 101–110           | 111–129          | >129         |
| Syst BP   | ≤70              | 71–80              | 81–100 | 101–199   |                   | ≥200             |              |
| Urine output  | <20 mL/h for 2 h | <0.5 mL/kg/h       |        |           |                   |                  |              |
| Temp (°C)   |                  | ≤35                |        | 35.1–37.2 | 37.3–37.9         | ≥38              |              |
| Neurological  |                  | Confused/ agitated |        | Alert     | Responds to voice | Responds to pain | Unresponsive |
| <i>RR, respiratory rate, breaths/min; HR, heart rate, beats/min; syst BP, systolic blood pressure, mmHg</i> |                  |                    |        |           |                   |                  |              |

**Table 12.2** Causes of shock**Hypovolaemic (reduced preload)**

Haemorrhage: trauma, gastrointestinal bleeding, fractures, ruptured aortic aneurysm

Fluid loss: burns, severe diarrhoea, intestinal obstruction (fluid accumulates in the intestine)

**Cardiogenic (pump failure)**

Myocardial infarction

Myocarditis

Atrial and ventricular arrhythmias

Bradycardias

Rupture of a valve cusp

**Obstructive**

Obstruction to outflow: massive pulmonary embolism, tension pneumothorax

Restricted cardiac filling: cardiac tamponade, constrictive pericarditis

**Distributive (decrease in systemic vascular resistance)**

Vascular dilatation: drugs, sepsis

Arteriovenous shunting

Maldistribution of flow, e.g. sepsis, anaphylaxis

## Pathophysiology

**Sympathoadrenal** In response to hypotension there is a reflex increase in sympathetic nervous activity and catecholamine release from the adrenal medulla. The resulting vasoconstriction, increased myocardial contractility and heart rate help restore blood pressure and cardiac output. Activation of the renin–angiotensin system also leads to vasoconstriction and salt and water retention, which help to restore circulating volume.

## Neuroendocrine response

There is release of the pituitary hormones: ACTH, vasopressin and endogenous opioids. Cortisol release causes fluid retention and antagonizes insulin. However, the cortisol response to ACTH is blunted in septic shock but the clinical significance of this is not known. There is release of glucagon which, together with catecholamines, raises blood sugar.

**Release of mediators** Severe infection, the presence of large areas of damaged tissue (e.g. following trauma or extensive surgery) or prolonged/repeated episodes of hypoperfusion can trigger a massive inflammatory response with activation of leucocytes, complement and the coagulation cascade. This is beneficial when targeted against local areas of infection or necrotic tissue but dissemination of this response can produce shock and widespread tissue damage.

- Cell wall components from Gram-negative (lipopolysaccharide) and Gram-positive (e.g. lipoteichoic acid) bacteria form a complex with specific serum proteins before attaching to a cell surface marker (CD14) and triggering a cascade of membrane bound (toll-like receptor family) and intracellular signaling pathways (MyD 88, NF- $\kappa$ B). This in turn leads to release of reactive oxygen and nitrogen species that kill bacteria, pro-inflammatory cytokines (tumour necrosis factor, interleukin-1 and -6) which mediate inflammation and the metabolic response, and anti-inflammatory cytokines (interleukin-10) which if excessive can cause inappropriate immune hyporesponsiveness.
- Pro-inflammatory cytokines promote adhesion of activated leucocytes to the vessel wall and subsequent extravascular migration leading to tissue damage and organ dysfunction.
- Platelet activating factor and lysosomal enzymes (by converting inactive kininogens to vasoactive kinins) cause increased vascular permeability.
- Nitric oxide produced by vascular endothelial cells under the influence of certain cytokines leads to vasodilatation, hypotension and reduced reactivity to adrenergic mediators.

**Microcirculatory changes** In the early stages of septic shock there is vasodilatation, increased capillary permeability with interstitial oedema, and arteriovenous shunting. Vasodilatation and increased capillary permeability also occur in anaphylactic shock. In the initial stages of other forms of shock, and in the later stages of sepsis and anaphylaxis, there is capillary sequestration of blood. Fluid is forced into the extravascular space, causing interstitial oedema, haemoconcentration and an increase in plasma viscosity.

**Activation of the coagulation system** occurs in all forms of shock, leading to platelet aggregation, widespread intravascular thrombosis and inadequate tissue perfusion, with the development of disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC, see p. 235).

**Progressive organ failure** may develop as a result of the disseminated inflammatory response and microcirculatory changes. In *multiple organ dysfunction syndrome* (MODS), also known as multiple organ failure (MOF) the lungs are usually affected first with the development of the *acute respiratory distress syndrome* (ARDS). The mortality in MODS is high and treatment is supportive.

## Clinical features

The history will often indicate the cause of shock, e.g. a patient with major injuries (often internal and thus concealed) will often develop hypovolaemic shock. A patient with a history of peptic ulceration may now be bleeding into the gastrointestinal tract, and rectal examination will show melaena. Anaphylactic shock develops in susceptible individuals after insect stings and eating certain foods (Emergency Box 12.1).



## Emergency Box 12.1

### Anaphylactic shock

#### Pathophysiology

Massive release of mediators from mast cells and basophils induced by cross-linking of surface IgE with trigger antigen (e.g. penicillin, latex, bee sting, radiographic contrast media, eggs, peanuts, shellfish) leads to increase in vascular permeability, vasodilatation and respiratory smooth muscle contraction.

#### Diagnosis

Typical symptoms and signs (p. 577) developing after exposure to an agent known to provoke anaphylaxis.

#### Management

- **Remove** the precipitating cause, e.g. stop administration of the offending drug
- **Oxygen** high flow
- **Adrenaline** 0.5 mL of a 1 : 1000 solution (500 µg) injected intramuscularly if life-threatening features (respiratory distress or shock). Repeat in 5 minutes if no clinical improvement. Intravenously (5 mL 1 : 10 000) only if cardiac arrest. Half doses of adrenaline for patients taking amitriptyline, imipramine, or  $\beta$ -blocker
- **Fluids** 500–1000 mL 0.9% saline i.v.
- **Chlorphenamine** (antihistamine) 10 mg i.m. or i.v. over 1–2 minutes
- **Hydrocortisone** 200 mg i.m. or i.v. over 1–2 minutes
- **Admit** patient for observation (6–8 hours) because of risk of second late reaction
- **Prevent further attacks.** Refer to an immunologist or allergist, identify responsible allergen (careful history, skin testing, serum antibody tests by RAST or ELISA). Patients who have had an attack of anaphylaxis and who are at risk of developing another should carry a preloaded syringe of adrenaline for i.m. self-administration (e.g. EpiPen device) and wear an appropriate information bracelet (e.g. Medic Alert).

**Hypovolaemic shock** Increased sympathetic tone causes tachycardia (pulse > 100/min), sweating and peripheral vasoconstriction (as blood is redirected from the periphery to vital organs) leading to inadequate tissue perfusion with cold clammy skin and slow capillary refill (>3 seconds). Capillary refill is the number of seconds for the skin of the patient's digit to turn pink again after compression for 5 seconds. The blood pressure (particularly when supine) may be maintained initially, but later hypotension supervenes (systolic BP < 100 mmHg) with oliguria, tachypnoea, confusion and restlessness.

**Cardiogenic shock** Additional clinical features are those of acute heart failure, e.g. raised jugular venous pressure (JVP), pulsus alternans (alternating strong and weak pulses), a 'gallop' rhythm (additional 3rd and 4th heart sounds), basal crackles and pulmonary oedema.

**Mechanical shock** Muffled heart sounds, pulsus paradoxus (pulse fades on inspiration), elevated JVP and Kussmaul's sign (JVP increases on inspiration) occur in cardiac tamponade. In massive pulmonary embolism there are signs of right heart strain, with a raised JVP with prominent 'a' waves, right ventricular heave and a loud pulmonary second sound.

**Anaphylactic shock** Onset of symptoms is usually within 5–60 minutes of antigen exposure. Profound vasodilatation leads to warm peripheries and hypotension. Urticaria, angio-oedema, wheezing, and upper airway obstruction due to laryngeal oedema may all be present.

**Sepsis** is an infection with evidence of a systemic inflammatory response (Table 12.3). There may be progression to severe sepsis and/or septic shock. Sepsis in elderly people or in the immunosuppressed is common without the classic clinical features of infection. The systemic inflammatory response syndrome also occurs with severe burns, trauma and acute pancreatitis and these conditions may therefore mimic infection.

**Table 12.3** Differing degrees of severity of sepsis

Sepsis – systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS) associated with infection

SIRS is two or more of:

Fever  $>38^{\circ}\text{C}$  or hypothermia  $<36^{\circ}\text{C}$

Tachycardia: heart rate  $> 90$  beats/min

Tachypnoea: respiratory rate  $> 20$  breaths/min or  $P_{\text{a}}\text{CO}_2 < 4.3$  kPa

Leucocytosis (white blood cell count  $>12 \times 10^9/\text{L}$ ), leucopenia (white cell count  $<4 \times 10^9/\text{L}$ ) or bandaemia ( $>10\%$  immature forms)

Severe sepsis – sepsis with dysfunction of one or more organs:

Kidneys – creatinine  $> 177 \mu\text{mol/L}$  or urine output  $< 0.5$  ml/kg/h for 2 h

Coagulation – platelets  $< 100$ , aPTT  $> 60$  s, INR  $> 1.5$

Respiratory – new or increased oxygen needs to keep  $\text{SpO}_2 > 90\%$

Liver – bilirubin  $> 34 \mu\text{mol/L}$

Tissue hypoperfusion: systolic BP  $< 90$  mmHg, MAP  $> 65$  mmHg, drop in  $> 40$  mmHg from patient's normal BP or serum lactate  $> 2$  mmol/L

Septic shock – persisting tissue hypoperfusion after a fluid challenge:

Evidence of tissue hypoperfusion after an intravenous fluid bolus with saline 0.9% or Hartmann's solution

MAP, mean arterial pressure over a cardiac cycle, approximated from systolic and diastolic pressures

## Management

This is summarized in Emergency Box 12.2. The underlying cause must be identified and treated appropriately. Whatever the aetiology of shock, tissue blood flow and blood pressure must be restored as quickly as possible to avoid the development of multiple organ failure.

**Expansion of the circulating volume (preload)** Volume replacement is necessary in hypovolaemic shock and also in anaphylactic shock. Fluid is also given to patients with severe sepsis where there is vasodilatation, sequestration of blood and loss of circulating volume secondary to capillary leakage. These patients have evidence of organ dysfunction but may not



### Emergency Box 12.2

#### Management of shock

##### Ensure adequate oxygenation and ventilation

- Maintain patent airway: use oropharyngeal airway or endotracheal tube if necessary
- Oxygen 15 L/min via facemask with reservoir bag unless oxygen restriction necessary (p. 521)
- Support respiratory function early: non-invasive or mechanical ventilation
- Monitor: respiratory rate, blood gases and chest X-ray

##### Restore cardiac output and blood pressure

- Lay patient flat or head-down
- Expand circulating volume with appropriate fluids given quickly via large-bore cannulae
- Inotropic support, vasodilators, intra-aortic balloon counterpulsation in selected cases
- Monitor in all: skin colour, pulse, blood pressure, peripheral temperature, urine output, ECG
- Monitor in selected cases: CVP monitoring, cardiac function/output

##### Investigations

- All cases: FBC, serum creatinine and electrolytes, blood glucose, liver biochemistry, coagulation, blood gases, ECG
- Selected cases: culture of blood, urine, sputum, pus and CSF, blood lactate, D-dimers, echocardiogram

##### Treat underlying cause

- Haemorrhage, sepsis, anaphylaxis

##### Treat complications

- Coagulopathy, acute kidney injury, etc.



necessarily be hypotensive (Table 12.3). High filling pressures may also be needed in mechanical shock. Care must be taken to prevent volume overload, which leads to a reduction in stroke volume and a rise in left atrial pressure with a risk of pulmonary oedema. The choice of fluid depends on the clinical situation.

- Blood is given for haemorrhage as soon as it is available. Complications of massive blood transfusion are hypothermia (minimized by using a blood warmer during infusion), coagulopathy (stored blood has almost no effective platelets and is deficient in clotting factors), hypocalcaemia (citrate anticoagulation in stored blood binds calcium), hyperkalaemia (passive leakage from stored red cells), and acute lung injury due to microaggregates in stored blood. The platelet count, prothrombin time, activated partial thromboplastin time, plasma calcium and potassium should be measured after rapid transfusion of 3–5 units of blood.
- Crystalloid (0.9% saline or Hartmann's solution, p. 326) is given for acute blood loss before blood becomes available, and for volume replacement in anaphylactic shock and severe sepsis. There has been considerable debate of the merits of crystalloid versus colloid in volume resuscitation and in most situations there are no apparent clinical differences. In severe sepsis 500–1000 ml boluses crystalloid is given over 30 minutes with the aim of maintaining a central venous pressure 8–12 mmHg, mean arterial pressure  $\geq$  65 mmHg and urine output  $>$  0.5 ml/kg/hour.

**Myocardial contractility and inotropic agents** Myocardial contractility is impaired in cardiogenic shock and at a later stage in other forms of shock as a result of hypoxaemia, acidosis and the release of mediators. The treatment of acidosis should concentrate on correcting the cause; intravenous bicarbonate should only be administered to correct extreme (pH  $<$  7.0) persistent metabolic acidosis. Drugs that impair cardiac performance, e.g. beta-blockers, should be stopped. When the signs of shock persist despite adequate volume replacement (indicated by a CVP (see below) of 8–12 mmHg), inotropic agents are administered. Inotropic agents are administered via a large central vein and the effects must be carefully monitored. The inotropic agents used and their clinical effects are shown in Table 12.4. The particular agent used depends on the values for mean arterial pressure, cardiac output and personal preference.

**Additional treatment** Vasodilators, e.g. sodium nitro-prusside and isosorbide dinitrate, may be useful in selected patients who remain vasoconstricted and oliguric despite adequate volume replacement and a satisfactory blood pressure. Finally, in patients with a potentially reversible depression of left ventricular function (e.g. cardiogenic shock secondary to a ruptured interventricular septum), intra-aortic balloon counterpulsation (IABCP) is used as a temporary measure to maintain life until definitive surgical treatment can be carried out.

**Table 12.4** Inotropic agents used in the management of shock

| Inotropic agent                | Sympathomimetic and dopaminergic (D) effects and main clinical use   |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Adrenaline</b>              | Low dose (0.06–0.1 µg/kg/min), β-adrenergic effects predominate with increase in cardiac output and fall in systemic vascular resistance (SVR). High dose (>0.18 µg/kg/min), α <sub>1</sub> -adrenergic effects predominate with increased SVR. This may increase renal perfusion pressure and urine output but excessive vasoconstriction leads to decreased cardiac output, oliguria and peripheral gangrene<br>Potent agent, used in refractory hypotension |
| <b>Noradrenaline</b>           | Predominantly α-adrenergic agonist. Particularly useful in those with hypotension and a low SVR, e.g. septic shock   |
| <b>Dopamine</b>                | Low dose (1–3 µg/kg/min), predominantly acts on D <sub>1</sub> receptor resulting in selective vasodilatation. Moderate dose – β <sub>1</sub> receptors also stimulated with increased heart rate, myocardial contractility and cardiac output. High dose (>10 µg/kg/min) – α-adrenergic effects predominant with an increase in SVR   |
| <b>Dopexamine</b>              | Dopamine analogue that activates β <sub>2</sub> receptors as well as D <sub>1</sub> and D <sub>2</sub> receptors. Weakly positive inotrope and powerful splanchnic vasodilator, reducing afterload and improving blood flow to vital organs. Most useful in those with low cardiac output and peripheral vasoconstriction  |
| <b>Dobutamine</b>              | Predominantly β <sub>1</sub> activity. Minimal α and β <sub>2</sub> receptor activity results in vasodilatation. The net effect is increased cardiac output with decreased SVR   |
| <b>Milrinone and enoximone</b> | Phosphodiesterase inhibitors with inotropic and vasodilator effects through non-adrenergic mechanisms  |
| <b>Vasopressin</b>             | Increases blood pressure and SVR. Used in septic shock where circulating levels of vasopressin are inappropriately low   |

*α<sub>1</sub>-adrenergic receptors – located in vascular wall and heart. Increase SVR and duration of cardiac contraction*

*β<sub>1</sub>-adrenergic receptors – located in the heart, inotropic and chronotropic action results in increased cardiac output*

*β<sub>2</sub>-adrenergic receptors – located in blood vessels and mediate vasodilatation*

*Postsynaptic D<sub>1</sub> receptors mediate vasodilatation of mesenteric, renal, coronary and cerebral circulation*

*Presynaptic D<sub>2</sub> receptors cause vasoconstriction by inducing noradrenaline release*

**Specific treatment of the cause** In all cases the cause of shock must be identified if possible and specific treatment given when indicated:

- *Septic shock.* Antibiotic treatment of septicæmia is discussed on page 16. Therapy should be directed towards the probable cause. In the absence of helpful clinical guidelines, 'blind' intravenous antibiotic therapy (e.g. cefuroxime and gentamicin) should be started after performing an infection screen: chest X-ray and culture of blood, urine and sputum. Lumbar puncture, ultrasonography and CT of the chest and abdomen are useful in selected cases. Abscesses require drainage. Recombinant human activated protein C and low dose hydrocortisone improves outcome in some patients with septic shock.
- *Anaphylactic shock* must be identified and treated immediately (Emergency Box 12.1).

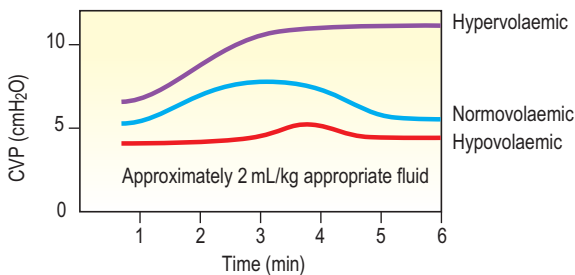
## Monitoring

This is by both clinical and invasive means.

**Clinical** An assessment of skin perfusion, measurement of pulse, BP, JVP and urinary flow rate will guide treatment in a straightforward case. Additional invasive monitoring will be required in seriously ill patients who do not respond to initial treatment.

### Invasive

- *Blood pressure.* A continuous recording is made with an intra-arterial cannula, usually in the radial artery.
- *Central venous pressure (CVP)* is related to right ventricular end-diastolic pressure, which depends on circulating blood volume, venous tone, intrathoracic pressure and right ventricular function. CVP is measured by inserting a central venous catheter (CVC) often under ultrasound control, into the superior vena cava or right atrium via percutaneous puncture of a subclavian or internal jugular vein. The catheter is connected to a manometer system (for intermittent CVP readings) or transducer system (for continuous readings displayed on a monitor). CVP is measured in a supine patient by aligning the transducer with the mid axilla (level with the right atrium); the normal range is 5–10 cmH<sub>2</sub>O (mid axilla). Other landmarks are advocated and whichever is chosen should be used on subsequent occasions. An isolated CVP is of limited value; a trend of readings is much more significant and should be viewed in conjunction with other parameters, e.g. blood pressure and urine output. In shock, CVP may be normal, because in spite of hypovolaemia there is increased venous tone. A better guide to circulating volume is the response to a fluid challenge (Fig. 12.1). A CVC is also used to measure central venous oxyhaemoglobin saturation (ScvO<sub>2</sub>).
- *Pulmonary artery catheters*, also called Swan–Ganz catheters, measure cardiac output and the pulmonary artery occlusion pressure, which



**Fig. 12.1** The effect on the central venous pressure of a rapid administration of a 'fluid challenge' to patients with a CVP within the normal range. (From Sykes MK. Venous pressure as a clinical indication of adequacy of transfusion. *Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England* 1963; 33: 185–197.)

reflects left atrial pressure. In theory this should help to guide circulatory resuscitation. However, they increase complications and have not been shown to improve outcome and less invasive techniques are increasingly preferred.

- **Cardiac output** is measured using oesophageal Doppler ultrasonography and lithium dilution; cardiac output is also measured using transoesophageal echocardiography.

## RESPIRATORY FAILURE

Respiratory failure occurs when pulmonary gas exchange is sufficiently impaired to cause hypoxaemia with or without hypercapnia. In practical terms, respiratory failure is present when the  $P_{aO_2}$  is  $< 8$  kPa (60 mmHg) or the  $P_{aCO_2}$  is  $> 7$  kPa (55 mmHg).

It can be divided into two types (Table 12.5):

- Type 1 respiratory failure in which the  $P_{aO_2}$  is low and the  $P_{aCO_2}$  is normal or low. It is most commonly caused by diseases that damage lung tissue. The hypoxaemia is due to ventilation–perfusion mismatch or right-to-left shunts.
- Type 2 respiratory failure in which the  $P_{aO_2}$  is low and the  $P_{aCO_2}$  is high is caused by alveolar hypoventilation.

## Monitoring

**Clinical** Assessment should be made on the following criteria: tachypnoea, tachycardia, sweating, pulsus paradoxus, use of accessory muscles of respiration, intercostal recession and inability to speak. Signs of carbon dioxide retention may be present, such as asterixis (coarse tremor), bounding pulse, warm peripheries and papilloedema.

**Table 12.5** Causes of respiratory failure

| Type 1   | Type 2   |
|--|--|
| Pulmonary oedema   | COPD   |
| Pneumonia  | Life-threatening acute severe asthma               |
| Acute severe asthma  | Respiratory muscle weakness, e.g. GBS              |
| Pneumothorax   | Respiratory centre depression, e.g. with sedatives |
| COPD   | Sleep apnoea                                       |
| Pulmonary embolism   | Chest wall deformities                             |
| Acute respiratory distress syndrome  | Inhaled foreign body                               |
| Lung fibrosis  |  |
| Right-to-left cardiac shunts   |  |
| <i>COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; GBS, Guillain-Barré syndrome</i> |  |

**Table 12.6** Normal values for arterial blood gases

|                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| pH                      | 7.35–7.45    |
| $P_a\text{CO}_2$        | 4.3–6.0 kPa  |
| $P_a\text{O}_2$         | 10.5–14 kPa  |
| Base excess             | ± 2 mmol/L   |
| $\text{HCO}_3^-$        | 22–26 mmol/L |
| $\text{O}_2$ saturation | 95–100%      |

**Pulse oximetry** Lightweight oximeters placed on an earlobe or finger can give a continuous reading of oxygen saturation by measuring the changing amount of light transmitted through arterial blood. The normal range is 95–100%, but in general, if the saturation is greater than 90%, oxygenation can be considered to be adequate. Although simple and reliable, these instruments are not very sensitive to changes in oxygenation. They also give no indication of carbon dioxide retention.

**Forced vital capacity (FVC)** In patients with acute neuro-muscular problems, e.g. Guillain-Barré syndrome and myasthenia gravis, FVC is used as a guide to deterioration. ITU admission is recommended when the FVC is less than 20 mL/kg, and typically intubation and ventilation are necessary when the FVC is less than 10 mL/kg.

**Arterial blood gas analysis** Analysis of arterial blood gives definitive measurements of  $P_a\text{O}_2$ ,  $P_a\text{CO}_2$ , oxygen saturation, pH and bicarbonate. Normal values are given in Table 12.6. In type 2 respiratory failure, retention of

carbon dioxide causes  $P_a\text{CO}_2$  and  $[\text{H}^+]$  to rise, resulting in respiratory acidosis. In chronic type 2 failure (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), chest wall deformities) the bicarbonate concentration is also raised secondary to renal retention and the pH may partially or completely normalize due to this metabolic compensation (see Fig. 8.5). In type 1 respiratory failure or in hyperventilation there may be a fall in  $P_a\text{CO}_2$  and  $[\text{H}^+]$ , resulting in respiratory alkalosis. Other abnormalities of acid–base balance are discussed on page 343.

**Capnography** This allows the continuous breath-by-breath analysis of expired carbon dioxide concentrations and is mandatory in patients having tracheal intubation outside the ITU.

## Management

This includes the administration of supplemental oxygen, control of secretions, treatment of pulmonary infection, control of airway obstruction and limiting pulmonary oedema. Correction of abnormalities which may lead to respiratory muscle weakness, e.g. hypokalaemia, hypophosphataemia and undernutrition, is also necessary. In most patients oxygen is given by a face mask or nasal cannulae. With these devices, inspired oxygen concentration varies from 35 to 55%, with flow rates between 6 and 10 L. However, in patients with chronically elevated carbon dioxide (e.g. COPD), hypoxia rather than hypercapnia maintains the respiratory drive, and thus fixed-performance masks (e.g. Venturi masks) should be used, in which the concentration of oxygen can be accurately controlled. Respiratory stimulants such as doxapram have a very limited role in treatment.

**Respiratory support** Respiratory support is necessary when the above measures are not sufficient. The type depends on the underlying disorder and its clinical severity. Consideration should be given to ventilating patients with severe chronic lung disease, as those who are severely incapacitated may be difficult to wean from the ventilator:

- *Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP)* is used for acute type 1 respiratory failure. Oxygen is delivered to the spontaneously breathing patient under pressure via a tightly fitting face mask (non-invasive positive-pressure ventilation, NIPPV) or endotracheal tube. Oxygenation and vital capacity improve and the lungs become less stiff.
- *Bilevel positive airway pressure (BiPAP)* provides assistance during the inspiratory phase and prevents airway closure during the expiratory phase. The main indication for BiPAP in the emergency setting is an acute exacerbation of COPD in patients who do not require immediate intubation and ventilation. In these patients it is indicated when there is a persistent decompensated respiratory acidosis ( $\text{pH} < 7.35$  and  $P_a\text{CO}_2 > 6$  kPa) following immediate maximum medical treatment on controlled oxygen for no more than 1 hour (p. 521). BiPAP reduces the need for intubation, mortality and hospital stay. It is given for as long as possible during the

first 24 hours and continued until the acute exacerbation has resolved, usually 2–3 days. Contraindications are facial burns/trauma/recent facial or upper airway surgery, vomiting, fixed upper airway obstruction, undrained pneumothorax, inability to protect the airway, intestinal obstruction, confusion, agitation and patient refusal of treatment.

- *Intermittent positive-pressure ventilation (IPPV)*. IPPV requires tracheal intubation and therefore anaesthesia if the patient is conscious. The indications for mechanical ventilation are listed in Table 12.7. The beneficial effects include improved carbon dioxide elimination, improved oxygenation, and relief from exhaustion as the work of ventilation is removed. High concentrations of oxygen (up to 100%) may be administered accurately. If adequate oxygenation cannot be achieved, a positive airway pressure can be maintained at a chosen level throughout expiration by attaching a threshold resistor valve to the expiratory limb of the circuit. This is known as positive end-expiratory pressure (PEEP), and its primary

**Table 12.7** Indications for IPPV

| Indication   | Comment  |
|--|--|
| Acute respiratory failure                          | With signs of severe respiratory distress despite maximal therapy:<br>respiratory rate > 40/min<br>inability to speak<br>patient exhausted, confused or agitated |
|  | Rising $P_a\text{CO}_2 > 8$ kPa  |
|  | Extreme hypoxaemia < 8 kPa, despite oxygen therapy   |
| Acute ventilatory failure, e.g. myasthenia gravis, | Institute when vital capacity fallen to 10–15 mL/kg  |
| Guillain–Barré syndrome                            | High $P_a\text{CO}_2$ , particularly if rising, is an indication for urgent mechanical ventilation   |
| Prophylactic postoperative ventilation             | In poor-risk patients  |
| Head injury  | With acute brain oedema. Intracranial pressure is decreased by elective hyperventilation as this reduces cerebral blood flow                                     |
| Trauma   | e.g. Chest injury and lung contusion   |
| Severe left ventricular failure                    |  |
| Coma with breathing difficulties                   | e.g. Following drug overdose   |

effect is to re-expand underventilated lung areas, thereby reducing shunts and increasing  $P_{aO_2}$ .

- *Intermittent mandatory ventilation (IMV)*. This technique allows the ventilated patient to breathe spontaneously between mandatory tidal volumes delivered by the ventilator. These coincide with the patient's own respiratory effort. It is used as a method of weaning patients from artificial ventilation, or as an alternative to IPPV.

The major complications of intubation and assisted ventilation are:

- Trauma to the upper respiratory tract from the endotracheal tube
- Secondary pulmonary infection
- Barotrauma – overdistension of the lungs and alveolar rupture may present with tension pneumothorax (p. 561) and surgical emphysema
- Reduction in cardiac output – the increase in intrathoracic pressures during controlled ventilation impedes cardiac filling and lowers cardiac output
- Abdominal distension due to intestinal ileus – cause not known
- Increased ADH and reduced atrial natriuretic peptide secretion. Together with a fall in cardiac output and reduced renal perfusion this leads to salt and water retention.

## ACUTE LUNG INJURY/ACUTE RESPIRATORY DISTRESS SYNDROME

Acute lung injury (ALI) and the more severe acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) are defined as respiratory distress occurring with stiff lungs, diffuse bilateral pulmonary infiltrates, refractory hypoxaemia, in the presence of a recognized precipitating cause and in the absence of cardiogenic pulmonary oedema (i.e. no clinical evidence of left atrial hypertension).

### Aetiology

The commonest precipitating factor is sepsis. Other causes include trauma, burns, pancreatitis, fat or amniotic fluid embolism, aspiration pneumonia or cardiopulmonary bypass.

### Pathophysiology

The cardinal feature is pulmonary oedema as a result of increased vascular permeability caused by the release of inflammatory mediators. Oedema may induce vascular compression resulting in pulmonary hypertension, which is later exacerbated by vasoconstriction in response to increased autonomic nervous activity. A haemorrhagic intra-alveolar exudate forms, which is rich in platelets, fibrin and clotting factors. This inactivates surfactant, stimulates inflammation and promotes hyaline membrane formation. These changes may result in progressive pulmonary fibrosis.



## Clinical features

Tachypnoea, increasing hypoxia and laboured breathing are the initial features. The chest X-ray shows diffuse bilateral shadowing, which may progress to a complete 'white-out'.

## Management

This is based on the treatment of the underlying condition. Pulmonary oedema should be limited with fluid restriction, diuretics and haemofiltration if these measures fail. Aerosolized surfactant, inhaled nitric oxide and aerosolized prostacyclin are experimental treatments whose exact role in the management of ARDS is unclear. Repeated positional change, i.e. changing the patient from supine to prone may allow reductions in airway pressures and the inspired oxygen fraction in those with severe hypoxaemia.

## Prognosis

Although the mortality has fallen over the last decade, it remains at 30–40%, with most patients dying from sepsis. The prognosis is very dependent on the underlying cause, and rises steeply with age and with the development of multiorgan failure.

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# Drug therapy, poisoning, and alcohol misuse

## DRUG PRESCRIBING

Medicines should be prescribed only when they are necessary; and in all cases the expected benefit of administering the medicine should be considered in relation to the risk of causing adverse effects. During pregnancy and breast feeding the risk of medicines to the fetus or baby must be considered in addition to the mother. Titles of drugs and preparations should be written in full. Where non-proprietary ('generic') drugs are available they should be used in prescribing other than rare exceptions where stated, e.g. modified release theophylline to avoid variable drug pharmacokinetics. Names followed by the symbol® are or have been used as proprietary names in the UK.

## Concordance with medication

It is estimated that about one third of medicines that are prescribed for long-term conditions are not used as recommended. Concordance aims to ensure a more effective use of medicines. A concordant consultation describes a consultation process between a healthcare professional and a patient in which the decision-making process regarding management takes into account the views of both the patient and the professional. The previous terms of non-compliance or non-adherence implied a paternalistic and dogmatic approach to drug prescription with little engagement of the patient in the decision-making process. Simplifying a drug regimen may help to improve concordance. Once-daily and twice-daily administration is better than three- or four-times daily. Combination products reduce the number of drugs taken but at the expense of inability to titrate individual drug doses. Using a multi-compartment medicines system is often helpful particularly in the elderly.

A discussion with the patient about prescription medication should include:

- What the medicine is and how and when to take it
- Likely benefits of treatment
- Likely or serious adverse effects and what to do if they think they are experiencing an adverse effect
- What will happen if they do not take the medicine
- Instructions for stopping the medicine or reducing the dose if necessary
- Choosing between medicines and also non-pharmacological alternatives.

## Adverse drug reactions

Any drug or vaccine may produce unwanted or unexpected adverse reactions. Health professionals (doctors, dentists, coroners, pharmacists and nurses) and, in some countries patients and carers, are encouraged to report suspected adverse drug reactions (even if in doubt about causality) to the relevant regulatory agency. In the UK this is via the Yellow Card Scheme to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Reports should be submitted for adverse reactions occurring with new drugs or vaccines on the market and established drugs causing a serious or unlisted reaction. Reporting acts as an early warning system for the identification of previously unrecognized reactions. The elderly are more susceptible to adverse drug reactions and drug interactions because of co-morbidity, poly-pharmacy and changes in drug distribution associated with a reduction in body mass and relatively more of the stroke volume reaching the brain (which explains why the elderly are more vulnerable to the effects of drugs acting centrally). Impairment of renal and liver function may necessitate a reduction in drug dosage or contraindicate prescribing of some drugs.

## Writing a prescription

All prescriptions should be written legibly in ink or otherwise so as to be indelible and should be dated with the drug written in full or using only approved abbreviations, usually listed in the *National Formulary*. The prescription should include the full name of the prescriber (and address for outpatient prescriptions), and the name, address and date of birth or age of the patient. Inpatient prescription drug charts should also have the patient's hospital identification number and list of drug allergies. The prescriber should sign each prescription. Many hospitals and local authorities will have local guidelines and policies, particularly, for antibiotic prescribing which should be referred to. Prescribing errors are amongst the most common medical errors. They include the wrong drug or dose being administered due to poor handwriting, drugs administered via the wrong route, and drugs prescribed for a patient who is clearly documented to be allergic to that drug.

## Best practice for drug prescribing

- Write clearly in legible handwriting
- Include details of the dose, frequency, route of administration and the start date for each drug. Duration of treatment e.g. antibiotics, should also be stated.
- Intravenous drugs should give the name and volume of diluent or infusion fluid or both
- The actual total dose should be specified when drugs are prescribed based on body weight, e.g. mg/kg
- State maximum dose and maximum frequency for 'as required' drugs
- Existing prescriptions should not be alerted. The prescription should be rewritten if a change is made
- Abbreviations are a major cause of clinical incidents and should be avoided: use microgram not  $\mu\text{g}$ , nanogram and not ng, units and not U or u
- Unnecessary use of decimal points should be avoided, e.g. use 125 microgram not .125 mg.

## Specific drugs

Each chapter has listed some of the drugs commonly prescribed, particularly by junior doctors. The doses given are for adults. A full list of drug interactions and dosage adjustment in renal and liver failure is beyond the scope of this book and readers should refer to the *National Formulary*. Similarly reference should be made for guidance during pregnancy and breast feeding.

## DRUG POISONING

In many hospitals in the developed world, acute poisoning is one of the most common reasons for acute admission to a medical ward. Poisoning may be:

- Deliberate
  - Self harm or suicide
  - Child abuse or Münchausen's syndrome by proxy
  - Third party, e.g. homicide or illicit drugs.
- Accidental
  - In children
  - Dosage error by patient or doctor
  - Recreational use, e.g. heroin, methadone and cocaine.
- Occupational exposure
- Environmental
  - Plants, foods, stings and bites.

Self-poisoning is the most common way by which people attempt suicide (deliberate self-harm, DSH) and those who succeed (suicides). Other means of DSH and suicide are usually by violent methods, e.g. hanging, shooting or drowning. In adults with self-poisoning admitted to hospital in the UK the most common drugs taken are paracetamol, benzodiazepines, antidepressants, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and aspirin. In many cases more than one substance is taken; alcohol is frequently a secondary poison. Outside hospital, where most deaths occur, the commonest cause is deliberate carbon monoxide poisoning from inhalation of vehicle exhaust fumes. This is also seen in cases of accidental poisoning with faulty appliances using natural gas. In the developing world ingestion of pesticides, heating fuels, antimalarials and traditional medicines is more common.

The majority of cases (80%) of self-poisoning do not require intensive medical management, but all require a sympathetic and caring approach to their problems. Both the patient and the family may require psychiatric help (see p. 595) and the social services should be contacted to help with social and domestic problems.

## Clinical features

Eighty per cent of adults are conscious on arrival at hospital and the diagnosis of self-poisoning is usually made from the history. In the unconscious patient a history from friends or relatives is helpful, and the diagnosis can often be inferred from tablet bottles or a suicide note brought by the ambulance attendants. Tablet identification may be helped by the use of TICTAC, a visual drug identification database with information and high-quality images on thousands of tablets, capsules and related products (<http://www.tictac.org.uk>). In any patient with an altered conscious level drug overdose must always be considered in the differential diagnosis.

On arrival at hospital the patient must be assessed urgently (Airway, Breathing, Circulation) and Glasgow Coma Score recorded (p. 739).

The physical signs that may aid identification of the agents responsible for poisoning are shown in Table 13.1.

## Investigations

A blood sample should be taken at an appropriate time post drug overdose if the following drugs are likely to have been taken: aspirin, digoxin, ethylene glycol, iron, lithium (do not use a lithium heparin tube for blood sampling), methanol, paracetamol or theophylline. The determination of the concentration of these drugs will be valuable in management. Drug screens of blood and urine are also occasionally helpful in the seriously ill unconscious patient in whom the cause of coma is unknown. Further investigations depend on the drugs ingested and knowledge of their likely impact on metabolic and cardiorespiratory function and the clinical assessment of the patient, e.g. arterial blood gases in the comatose patient.

**Table 13.1** Some physical signs of poisoning

| Features                     | Likely poisons   |
|------------------------------|--|
| Constricted pupils           | Opioids<br>Organophosphorus insecticides<br>Nerve agents   |
| Dilated pupils               | Tricyclic antidepressants<br>Amfetamines<br>Cocaine<br>Antimuscarinic drugs                        |
| Divergent strabismus         | Tricyclic antidepressants  |
| Nystagmus                    | Phenytoin<br>Carbamazepine   |
| Loss of vision               | Methanol<br>Quinine  |
| Papilloedema                 | Carbon monoxide<br>Methanol  |
| Convulsions                  | Tricyclic antidepressants<br>Theophylline<br>Opioids<br>Mefenamic acid<br>Isoniazid<br>Amfetamines |
| Dystonic reactions           | Metoclopramide<br>Phenothiazines   |
| Delirium and hallucinations  | Antimuscarinic drugs<br>Amfetamines<br>Cannabis<br>Recovery from tricyclic antidepressant overdose |
| Hypertonia and hyperreflexia | Tricyclic antidepressants<br>Antimuscarinic drugs  |
| Tinnitus and deafness        | Salicylates<br>Quinine   |
| Hyperventilation             | Salicylates<br>Phenoxyacetate herbicides<br>Theophylline   |
| Hyperthermia                 | MDMA (Ecstasy)   |
| Blisters                     | Usually occur in comatose patients   |
| Lips and skin 'cherry red'   | Carbon monoxide poisoning  |

*MDMA: 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine*

## Management

Most patients with self-poisoning require only general care and support of the vital systems. However, for a few drugs, additional therapy is required. The online TOXBASE® database (<http://www.spib.axl.co.uk>) provides up-to-date information about the diagnosis, management and treatment of patients suffering from exposure to a wide range of substances and products. It should be the first point of reference in all cases of poisoning. The management of a patient with overdose is summarized in Table 13.2.

### Emergency resuscitation (ABCDE, p. 740)

- Nurse the patient in the left lateral position to reduce the risk of aspiration.
- Clear the airway and intubate if the gag reflex is absent.
- Administer 60% oxygen by face mask in patients not intubated.
- Artificial ventilation is sometimes necessary if ventilation is inadequate (p. 582).
- Treat hypotension (p. 578), arrhythmias (p. 420) and convulsions (p. 756).
- Respiratory function (arterial blood gas analysis or pulse oximetry) and ECG monitoring in selected patients.
- Measure temperature with a low-reading thermometer and treat hypothermia (p. 659).

**Prevention of further drug absorption** These measures are reserved for those who have taken a potentially serious (life-threatening) overdose by mouth:

- *Gastric lavage* is rarely used due to the risk of complications and only if the procedure can be undertaken within 1 hour of ingestion. 200–300 mL of warm water or 0.9% saline are repeatedly instilled and aspirated from the stomach via a large-bore orogastric tube with the patient in the left lateral decubitus position. It is contraindicated if the airway is not protected or overdose of corrosives, petrol or paraffin taken. Complications include pulmonary aspiration and oesophageal perforation.
- *Activated charcoal* (50 g orally) adsorbs unabsorbed poison still present in the gut. It is given if the patient has ingested a drug absorbed by charcoal (e.g. aspirin, digoxin, paracetamol, barbiturates) up to 1 hour previously.

**Table 13.2** Principles of management of patients with self-poisoning

1. Emergency resuscitation
2. Prevent further drug absorption
3. Increase drug elimination
4. Administration of specific drug antidotes
5. Psychiatric assessment



- *Whole bowel irrigation* is only given for potentially toxic ingestions of iron, lithium, sustained-release or enteric-coated drugs and ingested drug packets. Polyethylene glycol electrolyte solution, e.g. Klean-prep, is infused via a nasogastric tube (1–2 L/h) until the rectal effluent is clear (usually 3–6 hours).

### Increasing drug elimination

- *Multiple-dose activated charcoal* (50 g 4-hourly until charcoal appears in the faeces or recovery occurs) interrupts the enterohepatic or entero-enteric recirculation. It is only used in patients who have ingested a life-threatening amount of carbamazepine, phenobarbital, dapsone, quinine or theophylline.
- *Urinary alkalinization* increases the urine pH and enhances the elimination of salicylates. It is rarely used now.
- *Haemodialysis* is used with severe lithium, ethanol, methanol, ethylene glycol and salicylate poisoning (see below).

**Antagonizing the effects of poisons** Specific antidotes are available for a small number of drugs and discussed under the individual drugs.

**Psychiatric assessment** All patients with DSH must be taken seriously and an assessment made of suicidal intent (Table 13.3). In some patients, often young females, the act was not premeditated, they have no wish to die and the tablets were taken in response to an acute situation, e.g. an argument with the boyfriend. The risk of suicide is low and formal psychiatric assessment is not always necessary. In the absence of potential medical problems these patients may not necessarily need to be admitted to hospital, provided there is the necessary social and emotional backup at home. In other patients there is clear suicidal intent: the act was planned, a suicide note was written and efforts were made not to be discovered. These patients must be assessed by a psychiatrist before they leave hospital.

## SPECIFIC DRUG PROBLEMS

In this section only specific treatment regimens will be discussed. The general principles of management of self-poisoning should always be applied.

### Aspirin

Overdosage of aspirin (salicylate) stimulates the respiratory centre, directly increasing the depth and rate of respiration and thereby producing a respiratory alkalosis. Compensatory mechanisms include renal excretion of bicarbonate and potassium, which results in a metabolic acidosis, and a fall in arterial pH indicates serious poisoning. Salicylates also interfere with carbohydrate, fat and protein metabolism, as well as with oxidative phosphorylation. This gives rise to increased lactate, pyruvate and ketone bodies, all of which contribute to the acidosis.

**Table 13.3** Guidelines for the assessment of patients who harm themselves**Questions to ask: be concerned if positive answer**

- Was there a clear precipitant/cause for the attempt?
- Was the act premeditated or impulsive?
- Did the patient leave a suicide note?
- Had the patient taken pains not to be discovered?
- Did the patient make the attempt in strange surroundings?
- Would the patient do it again?

**Other relevant factors**

- Has the precipitant or crisis resolved?
- Is there continuing suicide intent?
- Does the patient have any psychiatric symptoms?
- What is the patient's social support system?
- Has the patient inflicted self-harm before?
- Has anyone in their family ever taken their life?
- Does the patient have a physical illness?

**Indications for referral to a psychiatrist**

Absolute indications include:

- Clinical depression
- Psychotic illness of any kind
- Clearly preplanned suicide attempt which was not intended to be discovered
- Persistent suicidal intent
- A violent method used

Other common indications include:

- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Patients over 45 years, especially if male, and young adolescents
- Those with a family history of suicide in first-degree relatives
- Those with serious physical disease
- Those living alone or otherwise unsupported
- Those in whom there is a major unresolved crisis
- Persistent suicide attempts
- Any patients who give you cause for concern

**Clinical features**

These include tinnitus, nausea and vomiting, overbreathing, hyperpyrexia and sweating with a tachycardia. Alternatively, the patient may appear completely well, even with high plasma concentrations of salicylate. Ingestion of 10–20 g of aspirin by an adult (or one-tenth of this amount for a child) is likely to cause moderate or severe toxicity.

In severe poisoning (plasma salicylate concentration  $>700$  mg/L;  $5.07$  mmol/L) there may be cerebral and pulmonary oedema resulting from increased capillary permeability. Coma and respiratory depression may be seen with severe poisoning, but more frequently are due to the ingestion of a second drug or alcohol.

## Investigations

- Plasma salicylate concentration. Peak concentrations are usually reached 2–4 hours after ingestion but can be delayed till 24 hours. Rising concentrations are detected by measuring levels on admission and repeating after 2–4 hours
- Serum urea and electrolytes and blood glucose (hypoglycaemia may occur)
- Prothrombin time (may be prolonged)
- Chest X-ray and arterial blood gases.

## Management

- Correct dehydration and hypokalaemia with intravenous fluids
- Intravenous vitamin K (10 mg) to correct hypoprothrombinaemia
- Activated charcoal if appropriate (p. 594)
- Urine alkalinization if plasma salicylate  $>500$  mg/L ( $>3.62$  mmol/L). Infuse 225 mL of 8.4% sodium bicarbonate intravenously over 1 hour to ensure a urinary pH (measured by narrow-range indicator paper or pH meter) of more than 7.5 and preferably close to 8.5. Increasing urine pH from 5 to 8 increases urine salicylate excretion by 10–20 fold
- Haemodialysis if plasma salicylate  $>700$  mg/L ( $5.07$  mmol/L).

## Paracetamol (acetaminophen)

Paracetamol in overdose may cause fatal hepatic necrosis and is the commonest form of poisoning encountered in the UK today. Paracetamol is converted to a toxic metabolite, *N*-acetyl-*p*-benzoquinoneimine (NAPQI), which is normally inactivated by conjugation with reduced glutathione. After overdose, glutathione is depleted and NAPQI binds covalently with sulphhydryl groups on liver cell membranes, causing necrosis. Marked liver cell necrosis can occur with as little as 7.5 g (15 tablets) and death with 15 g. The prothrombin time or international normalized ratio (INR) is the best guide to the severity of the liver damage.

## Clinical features

The main danger is liver failure, which usually becomes apparent in 72–96 hours after drug ingestion. Initial symptoms include malaise, nausea and vomiting, with preserved consciousness unless another drug has also

been taken. Acute tubular necrosis may occur in the absence of severe liver failure.

## Management

Treatment depends on the interval between overdose and presentation and on the plasma concentrations of paracetamol (Emergency Box 13.1 and Figure 13.1). Levels are unreliable in a staggered overdose. *N*-acetylcysteine (NAC) is the treatment of choice and increases the availability of glutathione. Anaphylactoid reactions (urticarial rash, angio-oedema, bronchospasm, hypotension) occasionally occur with NAC and are treated by stopping the infusion, giving an antihistamine (e.g. chlorpheniramine 10–20 mg i.v.) and usually restarting the infusion once the reaction has settled. Patients who develop liver damage with a raised INR should remain in hospital until the values are returning to normal. Fresh frozen plasma should not normally be given to patients with a raised INR, as the trend in the INR is helpful in assessing prognosis and in determining the need for possible transplantation. Advice should be sought from a specialist liver unit at an early stage and usual transfer criteria are INR >3, hypotension after resuscitation with fluid,

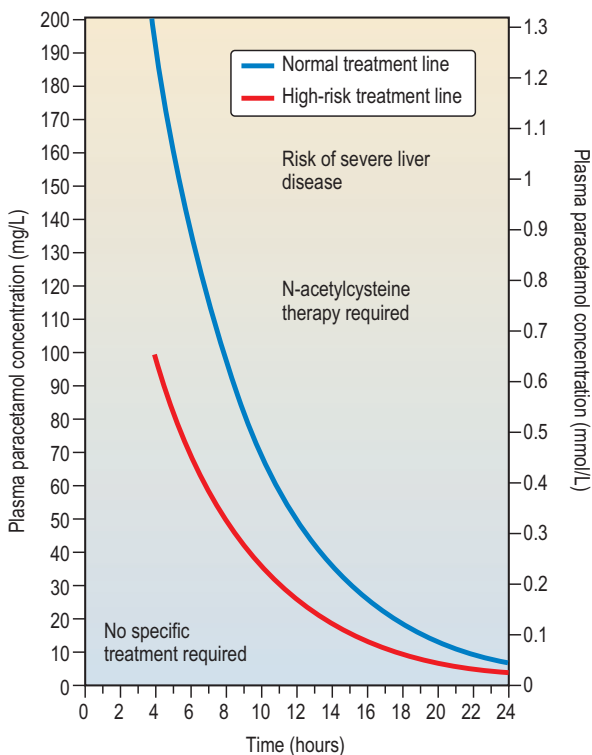


### Emergency Box 13.1

#### Management of paracetamol poisoning

- Take blood for paracetamol levels (at or after 4 h since ingestion), full blood count, INR, ALT activity, plasma creatinine and glucose
- Gastric lavage or single-dose activated charcoal if appropriate (p. 594)
- Give intravenous NAC in 5% dextrose immediately, without waiting for paracetamol levels, if potentially serious overdose (>150 mg/kg):
  - 150 mg/kg in 200 mL over 15 min, then
  - 50 mg/kg in 500 mL over 4 h, then
  - 100 mg/kg in 1 litre over 16 h.
- Decision to continue treatment based on paracetamol levels and nomogram (Fig. 13.1). Discontinue treatment if plasma paracetamol concentration is below relevant treatment line and there is no abnormality of INR, plasma creatinine or ALT.
- In patients presenting more than 24 hours after ingestion, NAC should not be started until results of investigations are available and toxicological advice has been sought.
- Repeat blood investigations (except paracetamol) at the end of NAC treatment. If the patient is asymptomatic and the investigations are normal, there is little risk of serious complications and the patient can be discharged.

NAC, *N*-acetylcysteine



**Fig. 13.1** Nomogram for treatment of paracetamol poisoning. Patients whose plasma paracetamol concentrations are above the normal treatment line should be treated with acetylcysteine. The high-risk (lower) treatment line should be used in patients with:

- Regular alcohol excess
- Poor nutrition
- Anorexia nervosa
- HIV infection
- Pre-existing liver disease
- Recent ingestion of enzyme-inducing drugs (carbamazepine, phenobarbital, phenytoin, rifampicin, St John's wort).

The prognostic accuracy after 15 hours is uncertain but a plasma-paracetamol concentration above the relevant treatment line should be regarded as carrying a serious risk of liver damage and treated with NAC.

metabolic acidosis and prothrombin time (seconds) > interval (hours) from paracetamol overdose. Patients with severe hepatic damage may require liver transplantation.

## Other drugs

Table 13.4 outlines the clinical features and management of other drugs that are commonly taken in cases of overdose. Initial management also includes gastric lavage and activated charcoal if indicated (p. 594).

**Table 13.4** Clinical features and specific management for certain drugs taken in overdose

| Drug                            | Clinical features  | Management   |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Tricyclic antidepressants (TCA) | Tachycardia, hypotension, fixed dilated pupils, convulsions, urinary retention, arrhythmias, decreased conscious level               | Treat convulsions with diazepam<br>Treat supraventricular and ventricular tachycardia with 8.4% sodium bicarbonate 50 mmol i.v. over 20 min, even in the absence of acidosis |
| Benzodiazepines                 | Drowsiness, ataxia, dysarthria, respiratory depression and coma. Potentiate the effects of other CNS depressants taken concomitantly | Give flumazenil (0.5–1.0 mg i.v. and repeated if necessary), a benzodiazepine antagonist, if respiratory depression. C/I if TCA also taken or history of epilepsy            |
| Phenothiazines                  | Hypotension, hypothermia, arrhythmias. Respiratory depression and coma. Convulsion and dystonic reactions                            | Symptomatic treatment of complications, e.g. diazepam for convulsions. Dystonic reactions treated with i.v. benztropine  |
| NSAIDs                          | Coma, convulsions, metabolic acidosis and renal failure  | Treatment is symptomatic and supportive  |
| β-Blockers                      | Bradycardia and hypotension. Coma, convulsions and hypoglycaemia with severe overdose  | Glucagon 50–150 µg/kg i.v. followed by an infusion of 1–5 mg/h has a positive inotropic action on the heart<br>Atropine 0.6–1.2 mg i.v. is less effective                    |

## Carbon monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is usually the result of inhalation of smoke, car exhaust or fumes from improperly maintained and ventilated heating systems. Methylene chloride, a component of paint remover, is readily absorbed and metabolized to CO by the liver and may lead to poisoning. CO combines with haemoglobin to form carboxyhaemoglobin, thus preventing the formation of oxyhaemoglobin. Clinical features are non-specific and include headache, mental impairment and, in severe cases, convulsions, coma and cardiac arrest. In spite of hypoxaemia the skin is pink. A venous carboxyhaemoglobin (COHb) level  $>3\%$  in non-smokers and  $>10\%$  in smokers confirms exposure to carbon monoxide by levels correlate poorly with symptoms. Treatment consists of removing the patient from the CO source and giving 100% oxygen via a face mask (do not use a rebreath reservoir). Hyperbaric oxygen treatment hastens CO elimination and is indicated if the victim has been unconscious, has cardiovascular dysfunction, or has a blood carboxyhaemoglobin concentration of more than 25%.

## Alcohol

Acute intoxication with alcohol produces severe depression of consciousness and hypoglycaemia, particularly in children. Treatment is supportive. Blood glucose is measured and glucose given if indicated.

## DRUG USE

Drugs with a high abuse potential, drugs of addiction and other drugs with non-therapeutic psychotropic activity are categorized as controlled drugs. In the UK, The Misuse of Drugs Act categorizes controlled drugs as class A, B and C. Class A drugs (ecstasy, LSD, heroin, cocaine, crack, magic mushrooms and injected amphetamines) are those considered to be the most harmful. In the UK, possession of a controlled drug is an offence. Any patient who is believed to be dependent on or addicted to controlled drugs must, by law, be notified to the Home Office.

## Opioids

Opioid drugs, e.g. diamorphine (heroin), codeine and buprenorphine, produce physical dependency, such that an acute withdrawal syndrome develops ('cold turkey') if the drugs are stopped. These severe withdrawal symptoms – profuse sweating, tachycardia, dilated pupils, leg cramps, diarrhoea and vomiting – may be reduced by giving methadone, a pharmaceutical preparation of an opioid.

Drug addicts frequently overdose themselves, causing varying degrees of coma, respiratory depression and pinpoint pupils. Treatment is with

intravenous naloxone (opiate antagonist) 0.4–2 mg repeated at intervals of 2–3 minutes until breathing is adequate, up to a maximum of 10 mg. If respiratory function does not improve an additional or alternative cause must be considered particularly poly-drug use – death associated with opiate overdose is often associated by concurrent misuse of benzodiazepines (p. 600). Intramuscular naloxone is given if intravenous access cannot be obtained. Naloxone is short acting and repeated doses or an infusion is necessary, with the rate titrated according to the clinical response.

## Cannabis

Cannabis (grass, pot, skunk, spliff, reefer) is a class B drug. It is usually smoked and is often taken casually. It is a mild hallucinogen and also increases the preexisting mood, e.g. depression, euphoria. Withdrawal symptoms are uncommon. Long-term use is associated with memory problems, apathy, manic-like psychoses and an increased risk of schizophrenia.

## Lysergide

Lysergic acid diethylamine (LSD) is a much more potent hallucinogen; its use can lead to severe psychotic states in which life may be at risk. Even in overdose, severe physiological reactions do not seem to occur. Adverse reactions are treated with repeated reassurance; a sedative, e.g. diazepam, is sometimes necessary. Phenothiazines may be necessary in severe cases.

## Cocaine

Cocaine can be taken by injection, inhalation ('crack') or ingestion. It stimulates the central nervous system, producing euphoria, agitation, hypertension and tachycardia. Convulsions, pyrexia and cardiorespiratory depression may occur in severe cases of overdose and management is supportive with diazepam (10 mg i.v.) for agitation and active external cooling for hyperthermia. It is a powerful vasoconstrictor and cocaine overdose should always be considered in a young person presenting with angina, myocardial infarction or stroke.  $\beta$ -Adrenoreceptor blockers are contraindicated as they may worsen hypertension; phentolamine 2–5 mg i.v. can be used for hypertension and nitrates for angina.

## Amfetamines

Amfetamines are taken for their stimulatory effect. In overdose there is confusion, delirium, hallucinations and violent behaviour. Cardiac arrhythmias can be a major problem. Treatment is with sedatives, such as diazepam. Forced acid diuresis may be used but is rarely required.



Ecstasy (MDMA, 3,4-methylenedioxy-methamphetamine) is a synthetic amphetamine derivative taken orally as tablets or capsules. The adverse effects of the drug are the result of the drug's pharmacological properties compounded by physical exertion, e.g. at a 'rave'. Serious acute complications are convulsions, hyperpyrexia, coagulopathy rhabdomyolysis, renal and liver failure and death. Treatment is rehydration, diazepam 10–20 mg i.v. for severe agitation,  $\beta$ -adrenoreceptor blockers for hypertension, and dantrolene (1 mg/kg bodyweight i.v.) for hyperthermia.

## Solvents

The inhalation of organic solvents is a common problem, particularly in teenagers. The patient presents either in the acute intoxicated state (with euphoria and excitement) or as a chronic user with excoriation and rashes over the face and a peripheral neuropathy. Sudden death can occur and is probably the result of cardiac arrhythmias.

## Management of body packers

Body packers or 'mules' are persons who attempt to smuggle drugs by swallowing drug-filled packets often containing cocaine or heroin. The packet may rupture in the gut resulting in massive intoxication or cause gastrointestinal obstruction or perforation. Suspected body packers should have a plain abdominal X-ray and a urine drug screen. Contrast-enhanced CT scan is performed if the plain film is negative and there is a high index of suspicion. Asymptomatic carriers are treated with an oral polyethylene glycol/electrolyte lavage solution at a rate of 2 L per hour to speed passage of packets, with follow-up imaging to document clearance of packets. Packets in the vagina can be removed manually. Immediate surgery is indicated if there is evidence of intestinal obstruction, perforation or systemic toxicity, particularly if the drug involved is cocaine for which there is no antidote.

## ALCOHOL USE

Drinking-related problems have increased in recent years. In the UK approximately one in five male admissions to acute medical wards is directly or indirectly the result of alcohol. Over the past 20 years admissions to psychiatric hospitals for the treatment of alcohol-related problems has increased 25-fold. Excessive alcohol use is the leading cause of preventable hypertension and increases the risk of myocardial infarction and stroke. There is a steady rise in recorded alcohol consumption in developing countries but these data are also likely to conceal heavy drinking in some localities and populations. Associated with this is an increase in alcohol-related problems including trauma, violence, various cancers and alcohol-associated organ damage.

Alcohol dependence is defined by a physical dependence on or addiction to alcohol. The key feature of alcohol dependence is a lack of control over

alcohol use, indicated by a compulsive need to drink and the inability to cut down or stop drinking. Guidelines for safe drinking limits are 21 units weekly for males and 14 units weekly for females. A slightly higher intake is probably unlikely to lead to harm, but more than 36 units per week in men and 24 units in women increases the risk to health. Units of alcohol in a drink are calculated by a simple equation:

### Units of alcohol in a drink

$$= \text{volume (1)} \times \% \text{ alcohol by volume (ABV)}$$

e.g. a  $\frac{3}{4}$  L bottle of whisky which is 40% ABV contains 30 units of alcohol.

In general, 1 unit = a measure of spirits, a glass of wine or half a pint of standard-strength beer.

## Screening for problem drinking

An elevated serum  $\gamma$ -GT ( $\gamma$ -glutamyl transpeptidase) (p. 141) and raised red cell mean corpuscular volume (MCV) are useful screening tests for excess alcohol use and are helpful in monitoring progress. Blood and urine alcohol levels are sometimes measured to demonstrate high intake.

## Consequences of alcohol use and dependence

### Physical complications

These usually occur after a long period of heavy drinking, e.g. 10 years. Problems are generally seen earlier in women than in men. Damage is the result of direct tissue toxicity and the effects of malnutrition and vitamin deficiency which often accompany excess alcohol use:

- *Cardiovascular*: a direct toxic effect in the heart leads to a cardiomyopathy and arrhythmias
- *Neurological*: acute intoxication leads to ataxia, falls and head injury with intracranial bleeds. Long-term complications include polyneuropathy (p. 787), myopathy, cerebellar degeneration (p. 724), dementia (p. 784) and epilepsy.

Wernicke's encephalopathy (WE) is the result of vitamin B<sub>1</sub> deficiency (thiamin) and also occurs in severe starvation and prolonged vomiting. The classic triad of WE (confusion, ataxia and ophthalmoplegia) occurs in a minority of patients. Mental changes are the most common (acute confusion, drowsiness, pre-coma and coma) whereas ataxia and ophthalmoplegia occur in less than one-third of patients. The diagnosis is clinical. A high index of suspicion and a low threshold for making a presumptive diagnosis is necessary. Treatment is urgent and is with an intravenous complex of B vitamins (e.g. two pairs of ampoules of high potency vitamins three times daily for 3 days followed by one pair of ampoules daily for 5 days), which may reverse

some of the early changes. Inappropriately managed, WE is fatal in 20% of patients. Of survivors, many will develop long-term brain damage (Korsakoff's syndrome) with a gross defect of short-term memory, associated with confabulation. Patients at risk of WE (significant weight loss, signs of undernutrition, alcohol withdrawal symptoms requiring hospital admission) should be treated prophylactically with one pair of ampoules of high potency B vitamins daily for 3–5 days followed with oral B vitamins on discharge. Administration of glucose may exacerbate the acute loss of thiamine and it is essential that thiamine is given before glucose:

- *Gastrointestinal*: liver damage (p. 174), acute and chronic pancreatitis (p. 189), oesophagitis and an increased incidence of oesophageal carcinoma
- *Haematological*: thrombocytopenia (alcohol inhibits platelet maturation and release from bone marrow), a raised MCV and anaemia caused by dietary folate deficiency
- *Psychiatric complications*: there is an increased incidence of depression and deliberate self-harm among patients with alcohol dependence. Attempted suicide must always be taken seriously and a psychiatric referral made (p. 596)
- *Social complications*: marital and sexual difficulties, employment problems, financial difficulties and homelessness.

## Alcohol withdrawal

Most heavy drinkers will experience some form of withdrawal symptoms if they attempt to reduce or stop drinking. No patient should ever be advised to stop drinking immediately due to the potentially life-threatening complications of alcohol withdrawal without appropriate detoxification:

- Early mild features occur within 6–12 hours and include tremor, nausea and sweating. Treatment is with a reducing dose of chlordiazepoxide (see Emergency Box 13.2).
- Late major features usually occur within 2–3 days, but may take up to 2 weeks:
  - Generalized tonic–clonic seizures (p. 753)
  - Delirium tremens is a potentially fatal severe alcohol withdrawal syndrome. There is fever, marked tremor, tachycardia, agitation and visual hallucinations ('pink elephants'). Treatment must be given urgently (see Emergency Box 13.2).

Alcohol detoxification is sometimes carried out in the community under the care of a specialist team. The patient attends daily for medication and monitoring. Exclusion criteria for community detoxification are inadequate social support, severe liver disease, concurrent medical or psychiatric illness or a previous history of delirium tremens or alcohol withdrawal fits.



## Emergency Box 13.2

### Management of alcohol withdrawal in hospital

- Prevent or treat established Wernicke's encephalopathy by administration of intravenous B vitamin complex (see p. 605). Give before administration of glucose-containing i.v. fluids.
- Correct dehydration and electrolyte imbalance. Hypophosphataemia and hypomagnesaemia is common.
- Chlordiazepoxide 30 mg four times daily decreasing to zero over 7 days. With very heavy alcohol intake and severe withdrawal symptoms the dose is increased up to 60 mg four times a day decreasing to zero over 10 days.
- Oxazepam is the drug of choice for alcohol detoxification in patients with severe liver disease as it is not metabolized by the liver.

After alcohol withdrawal it is essential that relapse is prevented. This involves local alcohol services, specialist psychiatry and the alcohol nurse specialist. 'Brief interventions' refers to 10–15 minutes of counselling, with feedback about drinking, advice and goal setting, and follow-up contact (one or more discussions lasting 10–15 minutes with a clinician or specialist nurse). Oral acamprosate, a GABA analogue, reduces relapses by 50%. Naltrexone is a pure opioid receptor antagonist that modifies the effects of alcohol by blunting its pleasurable effects and by reducing the craving. It reduces relapse rate compared with placebo.

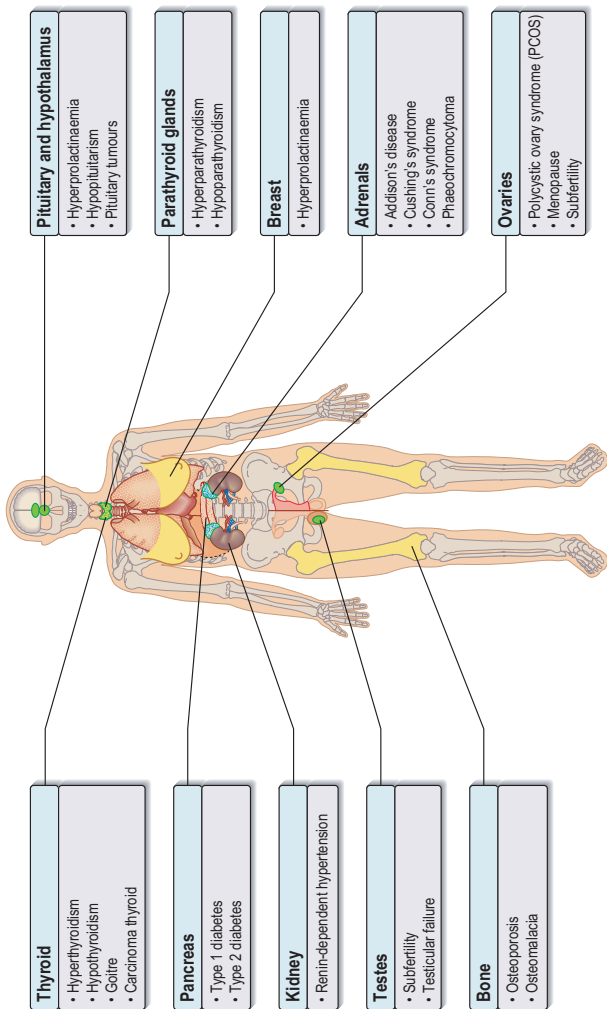
# Endocrine disease

The *endocrine* system refers to glands that release hormones (chemical messengers) directly into the blood stream through which they travel to affect distant organs. Most hormones are secreted into the systemic circulation but hypothalamic releasing hormones are released into the pituitary portal system to reach the pituitary gland. *Exocrine* glands, in contrast, secrete their products into ducts to reach their target. The pancreas has both endocrine (glucagon, insulin and somatostatin secreted by  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\delta$  cells respectively in the islets of Langerhans) and exocrine (digestive enzymes such as amylase secreted by acinar cells into the small intestine via the pancreatic duct) functions.

Most hormones travel in the circulation bound to proteins but it is only the free hormone that is biologically active. However, concentrations of binding proteins may be altered by disease or drugs and affect the amount of free hormone. Once at the target organ, hormones act by binding to specific receptors either on the target cell surface or within the cell (e.g. thyroid hormones, cortisol). The result is a cascade of intra-cellular reactions within the target cell which frequently amplifies the original stimulus and leads ultimately to a response by the target cell. Some hormones, e.g. growth hormone and thyroxine, act on most tissues of the body. Others act on only one tissue, e.g. thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) and adrenocorticotrophin (ACTH) are secreted by the anterior pituitary and have specific target tissues, namely the thyroid gland and the adrenal cortex. Endocrine disease can involve all of the endocrine glands of the body as illustrated in Figure 14.1.

## COMMON PRESENTING SYMPTOMS IN ENDOCRINE DISEASE

Hormones produce widespread effects upon the body and states of deficiency or excess typically present with symptoms that are generalized rather than focused on the anatomical location of the gland. Many of the presenting symptoms of endocrine disease are vague and non-specific, e.g. tiredness in hypothyroidism, weight loss or weight gain, increased thirst, anorexia and



**Fig 14.1** The major endocrine organs and common endocrine problems.

malaise in Addison's disease, and the differential diagnosis is often wide. Precocious puberty or delayed puberty is often the result of a familial tendency, although hypothalamic–pituitary disease may present in this way, and endocrine investigations are usually undertaken.

## The hypothalamus and pituitary

The hypothalamus contains many vital centres for functions such as appetite, thirst, thermal regulation and sleep/waking. It also plays a role in circadian rhythm, the menstrual cycle, stress and mood. Releasing factors produced in the hypothalamus reach the pituitary via the portal system, which runs down the pituitary stalk. These releasing factors stimulate or inhibit the production of hormones from distinct cell types (e.g. production of growth hormone by acidophils), each of which secretes a specific hormone in response to unique hypothalamic stimulatory or inhibitory hormones. The anterior pituitary hormones, in turn, stimulate the peripheral glands and tissues. This pattern is illustrated in Figure 14.2. The posterior pituitary acts as a storage organ for antidiuretic hormone (ADH, also called vasopressin) and oxytocin, which are synthesized in the supraoptic and paraventricular nuclei in the anterior hypothalamus and pass to the posterior pituitary along a single axon in the pituitary stalk. ADH is discussed on page 645; oxytocin produces milk ejection and uterine myometrial contractions.

## Control and feedback

Most hormone systems are controlled by some form of feedback; an example is the hypothalamic–pituitary–thyroid axis (Fig. 14.3). Thyrotrophin-releasing hormone (TRH), secreted in the hypothalamus, stimulates TSH secretion from the anterior pituitary into the systemic circulation. TSH in turn, stimulates the synthesis and release of thyroid hormones from the thyroid gland and the peripheral conversion of  $T_4$  to  $T_3$ , (the more active hormone). Circulating thyroid hormone feeds back on the pituitary, and possibly the hypothalamus, to suppress the production of TSH and TRH, and hence bring about a fall in thyroid hormone secretion. This is known as a 'negative feedback' system and represents the most common mechanism for regulation of circulating hormone levels. Conversely, a fall in thyroid hormone secretion (e.g. after thyroidectomy) leads to increased secretion of TSH and TRH. A patient with a hormone-producing tumour fails to show negative feedback and this is useful in diagnosis, e.g. the dexamethasone suppression test in the diagnosis of Cushing's syndrome (see later).

Other factors influencing hormone secretion are circadian rhythms (e.g. cortisol levels are highest in the early morning), physiological stress/acute illness (producing rapid increases in cortisol, growth hormone, prolactin and adrenaline (epinephrine)) and feeding and fasting (insulin is increased and growth hormone decreased after ingestion of food).

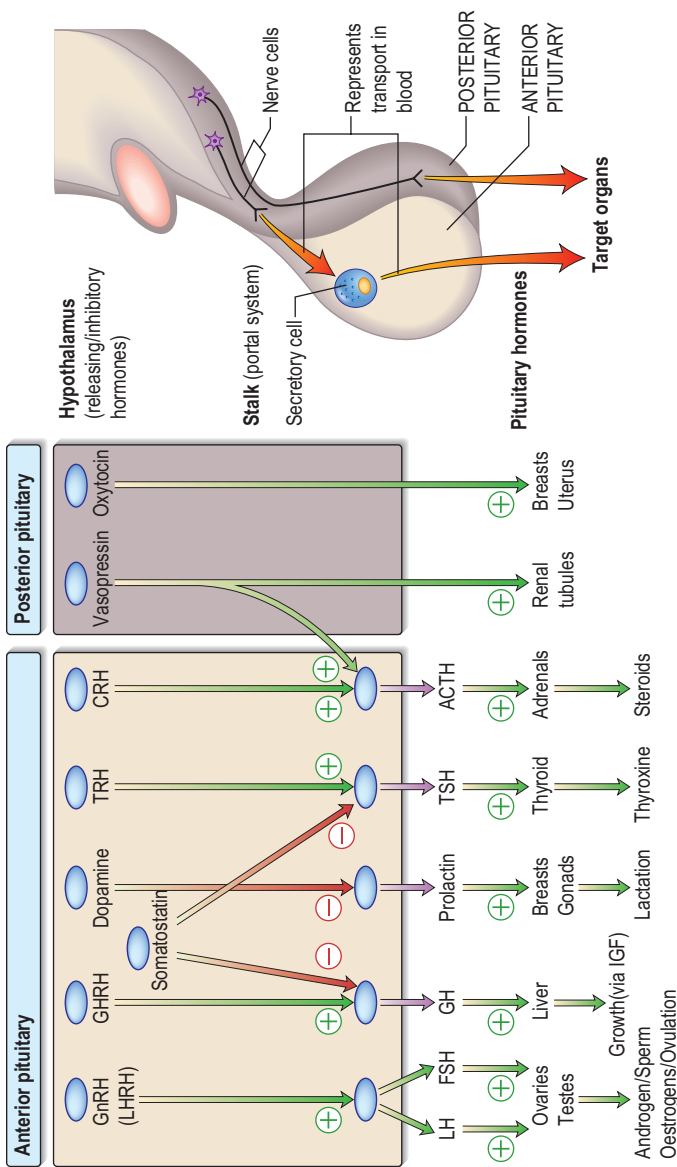
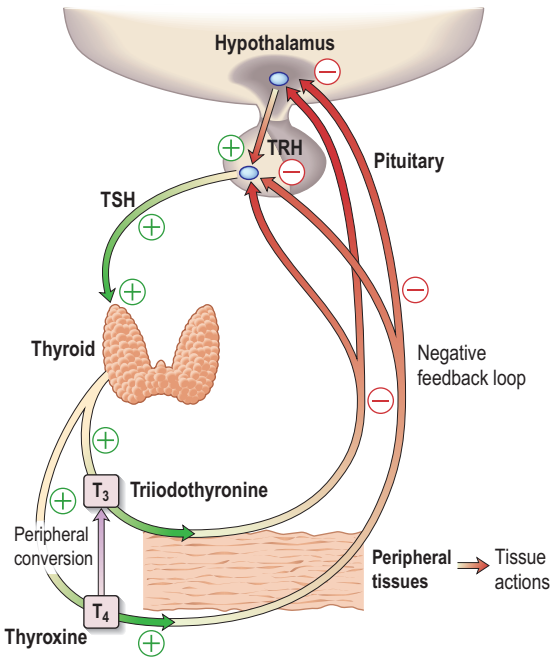


Fig. 14.2 Hypothalamic releasing hormones and the pituitary trophic hormones.





**Fig. 14.3** The hypothalamic–pituitary–thyroid feedback system.

## Pituitary space-occupying lesions and tumours

Benign pituitary tumours (adenomas) are the most common form of pituitary disease. Symptoms arise as a result of inadequate hormone production, excess hormone secretion, or from local effects of a tumour.

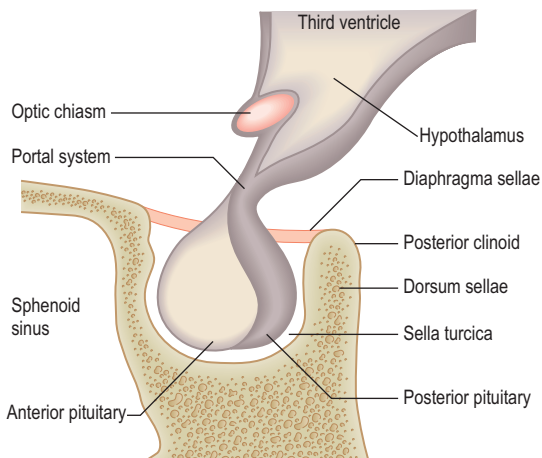
### Underproduction

This is the result of disease at either a hypothalamic or a pituitary level, and it results in the clinical features of hypopituitarism (p. 613).

### Overproduction

There are three major conditions usually caused by secretion from pituitary adenomas:

- Growth hormone (GH) excess – causing acromegaly in adults and gigantism in children
- Prolactin excess – causing galactorrhoea or clinically silent
- Excess ACTH secretion – Cushing's disease and Nelson's syndrome.



**Fig. 14.4** A sagittal section of the pituitary fossa showing the anatomical relationships. The cavernous sinus lies lateral to the pituitary and is seen on a coronal view.

### Local effects

Local pressure on, or infiltration of, surrounding structures (Fig. 14.4):

- Optic chiasm causing a bitemporal hemianopia (p. 726)
- Cavernous sinus with III, IV and VI cranial nerve lesions
- Bony structures and the meninges causing headache
- Hypothalamic centres: obesity, altered appetite and thirst, precocious puberty in children
- The ventricles, causing interruption of cerebrospinal fluid flow and hydrocephalus.

### Investigation

The purpose of investigation of a suspected pituitary mass is to confirm the diagnosis (usually by MRI of the pituitary), to determine if there is local pressure and infiltration (by clinical examination and plotting the visual fields using perimetry), and to assess for hormone overproduction (discussed under the respective diseases) and/or underproduction (see hypopituitarism). Most mass lesions of the pituitary are adenomas. The history, physical examination and MRI imaging help to exclude other rarer causes, e.g. craniopharyngioma, secondary deposits, sarcoidosis, Wegener's granuloma and cystic lesions.

## Hypopituitarism

Deficiency of hypothalamic-releasing hormones or pituitary hormones may be either selective or multiple. Multiple deficiencies usually result from tumour growth or other destructive lesions. There is a progressive loss of function, with GH and gonadotrophins (FSH and LH) being affected first and TSH and ACTH last. Rather than prolactin deficiency, hyperprolactinaemia occurs relatively early because of loss of tonic inhibitory control by dopamine (see Fig. 14.2). Panhypopituitarism is a deficiency of all anterior pituitary hormones. Vasopressin and oxytocin secretion will only be affected if the hypothalamus is involved by either hypothalamic tumour or by extension of a pituitary lesion.

### Aetiology

The commonest cause of hypopituitarism is a pituitary or hypothalamic tumour, or treatment of the tumour by surgical removal or radiotherapy (Table 14.1).

**Table 14.1** Causes of hypopituitarism

| Neoplastic                                 | Traumatic             |
|--|-----------------------|
| Primary tumour (pituitary or hypothalamus) | Skull fracture        |
| Secondary deposits, especially breast      | Surgery               |
| Lymphoma                                   |                       |
|  | Infiltrations         |
| Infective                                  | Sarcoidosis           |
| Basal meningitis e.g. tuberculosis         | Haemochromatosis      |
| Encephalitis                               |                       |
| Syphilis                                   | Others                |
|  | Radiation damage      |
| Vascular                                   | Chemotherapy          |
| Pituitary apoplexy                         | Empty sella syndrome  |
| Sheehan's syndrome                         |                       |
| Carotid artery aneurysms                   | Functional            |
|  | Anorexia              |
| Immunological                              | Starvation            |
| Pituitary antibodies                       | Emotional deprivation |
|  |                       |
| Congenital                                 |                       |
| Kallmann's syndrome                        |                       |

## Clinical features

These depend on the extent of hypothalamic–pituitary deficiencies. Gonadotrophin deficiency results in loss of libido, amenorrhoea (absent menstruation) and erectile dysfunction, whereas hyperprolactinaemia results in galactorrhoea (spontaneous flow of milk unassociated with childbirth or breast feeding) and hypogonadism. Deficiency of GH produces short stature in children but in adults it is often clinically silent, although it may result in significant impairment in well-being and work capacity. Secondary hypothyroidism and adrenal failure lead to tiredness, slowness of thought and action, and mild hypotension. Longstanding hypopituitarism may give the classic picture of pallor with hairlessness (alabaster skin). Particular syndromes related to hypopituitarism are:

- *Congenital deficiency of gonadotrophin-releasing hormone (GnRH)* – Kallmann’s syndrome (p. 631)
- *Sheehan’s syndrome* – pituitary infarction following severe postpartum haemorrhage. Rare in developed countries
- *Pituitary apoplexy* – rapid enlargement of a pituitary tumour due to infarction or haemorrhage. There is severe headache and sudden severe visual loss, sometimes followed by acute life-threatening hypopituitarism
- *‘Empty sella’ syndrome* – radiologically the sella turcica (the bony structure that surrounds the pituitary) appears devoid of pituitary tissue. In some cases, the pituitary is actually placed eccentrically and function is usually normal. In others there is pituitary atrophy (after injury, surgery or radiotherapy) and associated hypopituitarism.

## Investigation

Each axis of the hypothalamic–pituitary system requires separate investigation. The presence of normal gonadal function (ovulatory menstruation or normal libido/erections) suggests that multiple defects of the anterior pituitary are unlikely. Tests range from measurement of basal hormone levels to stimulatory tests of the pituitary and tests of feedback for the hypothalamus (see under individual endocrine systems).

## Management

Steroid and thyroid hormones are essential for life and are given as oral replacement drugs (e.g. 15–40 mg hydrocortisone daily in divided doses, 100–150 µg levothyroxine daily) with the aim of restoring clinical and biochemical normality. Androgens and oestrogens are replaced for symptomatic control. If fertility is desired, LH and FSH analogues are used. GH therapy should be given to the growing child under appropriate specialist supervision and it may also produce substantial benefits to the GH-deficient adult in terms of work capacity and psychological well-being. Two warnings are necessary:

- Thyroid replacement should not commence until normal glucocorticoid function has been demonstrated or replacement steroid therapy initiated, as an adrenal 'crisis' may otherwise be precipitated.
- Glucocorticoid deficiency masks impaired urine concentrating ability. Diabetes insipidus is apparent after steroid replacement, the steroids being necessary for excretion of a water load.

## PITUITARY HYPERSECRETION SYNDROMES

### Acromegaly and gigantism




Pituitary growth hormone (GH) is secreted in a pulsatile fashion under the control of two hypothalamic hormones: GH releasing hormone (GHRH) stimulates and somatostatin inhibits secretion. Ghrelin, which is synthesized in the stomach, also increases GH secretion. GH exerts its activity indirectly through the induction of insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1), which is synthesized in the liver and other tissues, or directly on tissues such as liver, muscle, bone or fat to induce metabolic changes. Excessive GH production leads to gigantism in children (if acquired before fusion of the epiphyses of the long bones) and acromegaly in adults. Acromegaly is rare and caused by a benign pituitary GH-producing adenoma in almost all cases. Males and females are affected equally and the incidence is highest in middle age.

### Clinical features

Symptoms and signs are shown in Figure 14.5. The clinical manifestations of acromegaly can be divided into those due to local tumour expansion with compression of surrounding structures – headaches, visual field loss and hypopituitarism – and those due to the metabolic effects of excess GH secretion. Old photographs of the patient may be useful to demonstrate a change in appearance and physical features. The onset is insidious with many years between onset of symptoms and diagnosis. Inadequately treated acromegaly is associated with an increased mortality rate, particularly from cardiovascular disease and cancer.

### Investigations

- Plasma GH levels may exclude acromegaly if undetectable but a detectable value is non-diagnostic.
- Serum IGF-1 levels are almost always raised in acromegaly, and fluctuate less than those of GH. A normal serum IGF-1 concentration is strong evidence that the patient does not have acromegaly.
- Glucose tolerance test is diagnostic. If the serum IGF-1 concentration is high or equivocal, serum GH should be measured 2 hours after an oral glucose load. In a positive test there is failure of the normal suppression of serum GH below 1 mU/L. Some show a paradoxical rise.

| Symptoms  |  | Signs  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Change in appearance<br/>Increased size of hands/feet<br/>Headaches<br/>Excessive sweating<br/>Visual deterioration<br/>Tiredness<br/>Weight gain<br/>Amenorrhoea<br/>oligomenorrhoea in women<br/>Galactorrhoea<br/>Impotence or poor libido<br/>Deep voice<br/>Goitre<br/>Breathlessness<br/>Pain/tingling in hands<br/>Polyuria/polydipsia<br/>Muscular weakness<br/>Joint pains</p> <p>Old photographs are frequently useful<br/>Symptoms of hypopituitarism may also be present</p> |  | <p>Prominent supraorbital ridge<br/><b>Prognathism</b><br/><b>Interdental separation</b><br/><b>Large tongue</b><br/>Hirsutism<br/>Thick greasy skin<br/><b>Spade-like hands and feet</b><br/><b>Tight rings</b><br/>Carpal tunnel syndrome<br/>Visual field defects<br/>Galactorrhoea<br/>Hypertension<br/>Oedema<br/>Heart failure<br/>Arthropathy<br/>Proximal myopathy<br/>Glycosuria<br/>(plus possible signs of hypopituitarism)</p> |
|   |  |  |

**Fig. 14.5** The symptoms and signs of acromegaly. Bold type indicates signs of greater discriminant value.

- MRI scan of the pituitary will almost always reveal the adenoma.
- Visual field defects are common and should be plotted by perimetry.
- Pituitary function testing usually shows partial or complete hypopituitarism (p. 613).
- Serum prolactin (see hyperprolactinaemia).

## Management

Treatment is indicated in all except the elderly or those with minimal abnormalities. The aim of therapy is to reduce the serum IGF-1 concentration to within the age-adjusted reference range and lower the mean GH level to below 5 mU/L (<2.5 ng/L); this has been shown to reduce mortality to normal levels. Complete cure is often slow to achieve. Hypopituitarism should be corrected and diabetes and/or hypertension treated conventionally.

**Transsphenoidal surgical resection** is the treatment of choice. Access to the pituitary is achieved through the nasal cavity, sphenoid sinus and sphenoid bone. Complications are hypopituitarism, diabetes insipidus, CSF rhinorrhoea and infection.

**Medical therapy** is normally used when surgery alone has failed to reduce GH and IGF-I levels to normal. Somatostatin analogues (octreotide and lanreotide) and dopamine agonists (bromocriptine or cabergoline) inhibit GH secretion. The latter do not work as well as the somatostatin analogues but are given orally rather than by subcutaneous or intramuscular injection. Pegvisomant, a GH-receptor antagonist, is reserved for treatment of patients in whom IGF levels cannot be reduced to safe levels with somatostatin analogues alone.

**External radiotherapy** is used after surgical excision is incomplete and in combination with medical treatment as the response is slow (10 years or more). Stereotactic radiotherapy is used in some centres. It is a more accurate technique of tumour localization and irradiation and there is less radiation to normal brain tissue.

## Hyperprolactinaemia

Prolactin release is under tonic inhibition by dopamine from the hypothalamus and factors that increase prolactin secretion (e.g. TRH) are probably of less relevance (Fig. 14.2). There is a physiological increase in serum prolactin during pregnancy, lactation and severe stress.

### Aetiology

The commonest cause of pathological hyperprolactinaemia is a prolactin-secreting pituitary adenoma (prolactinoma). Other pituitary or hypothalamic tumours may also cause hyperprolactinaemia by interfering with dopamine inhibition of prolactin release. Other causes are primary hypothyroidism (high TRH levels stimulate prolactin), drugs (metoclopramide, phenothiazines, oestrogens, cimetidine) polycystic ovary syndrome and acromegaly (co-secretion of prolactin with GH by the tumour). Mildly increased serum prolactin levels (400–600 mU/L) may be physiological and asymptomatic but higher levels require investigation. Levels above 5000 mU/L always imply a prolactin-secreting pituitary tumour.

### Clinical features

Hyperprolactinaemia stimulates milk production in the breast producing galactorrhoea (spontaneous flow of milk unassociated with childbirth or breast feeding), and inhibits GnRH causing oligo- or amenorrhoea, decreased libido, subfertility and erectile dysfunction in men. If there is a pituitary tumour there may be headache and visual field defects.

## Investigations

- Serum prolactin level. At least three measurements should be taken. Further tests are appropriate after physiological and drug causes have been excluded
- Thyroid function tests, as hypothyroidism is a cause of hyperprolactinaemia
- MRI of the pituitary
- Pituitary function and visual fields (clinical assessment and perimetry) should be checked if a prolactinoma is the cause.

## Management

Causative drugs should be withdrawn if possible and hypothyroidism treated. Hyperprolactinaemia is controlled with a dopamine agonist such as cabergoline 500 µg once or twice a week judged on clinical response and prolactin levels. Bromocriptine has been longer established and is preferred if pregnancy is planned. Definitive therapy is controversial and depends on the size of the tumour, the patient's wish for fertility and the facilities available. Surgical removal of the tumour via a transsphenoidal approach (see acromegaly), combined with post-operative radiotherapy for large tumours, often restores normoprolactinaemia but there is a high rate of late recurrence (50% at 5 years). Small tumours (microadenomas) in asymptomatic patients may only need observation.

## THE THYROID AXIS

The thyroid gland secretes predominantly thyroxine (T<sub>4</sub>) and only a small amount of the biologically active hormone triiodothyronine (T<sub>3</sub>). Most circulating T<sub>3</sub> is produced by peripheral conversion of T<sub>4</sub>. Iodine is an essential requirement for thyroid hormone synthesis. Over 99% of T<sub>4</sub> and T<sub>3</sub> circulate bound to plasma proteins, mainly thyroxine-binding globulin (TBG) but only the free hormone is available for tissue action. Thyroid hormones control the metabolic rate of many tissues. The feedback pathway that controls the secretion of TSH is discussed on page 609. Thyroid function is assessed by measurement of:

- Serum TSH concentration
- Serum free T<sub>4</sub> (or T<sub>3</sub>) concentration.

Drugs and illness can alter the concentrations of binding proteins or interaction of the binding hormones with T<sub>4</sub> and T<sub>3</sub>. Thus free and total hormone concentrations may not be concordant. For instance, oestrogens (e.g. in pregnancy and in women taking the oral contraceptive pill) increase concentrations of TBG and hence total T<sub>4</sub>, but the physiologically important free T<sub>4</sub> concentrations are normal.



## Assessment of thyroid function tests

Measurement of thyroid function is indicated in patients falling into the following categories:

- Symptoms or signs suggestive of hypo- or hyperthyroidism (Table 14.2). Thyroid function should not be assessed in patients who have co-existing acute illness such as pneumonia (unless thyroid disease is strongly suspected) since changes in binding proteins, serum thyroid hormones (low total and free  $T_4$  and  $T_3$ ) and TSH (normal) occur in severe non-thyroidal illness (the 'sick euthyroid syndrome'). Most will be euthyroid on re-testing after recovery from the acute illness
- Receiving treatment for hypo- or hyperthyroidism
- Treatment with drugs causing thyroid disorders, e.g. amiodarone
- Post-irradiation – radioactive iodine therapy or external neck irradiation
- Post-surgery – subtotal thyroidectomy.

## Hypothyroidism

Underactivity of the thyroid gland may be primary, from disease of the thyroid gland, or much less commonly, secondary to hypothalamic or pituitary disease (secondary hypothyroidism).

### Aetiology

Hypothyroidism affects 0.1–2% of the population. It is much more common in women, and the incidence increases with age. The most common cause of primary thyroid failure in iodine-replete areas of the world is autoimmune thyroiditis.

**Table 14.2** Characteristics of thyroid function tests in thyroid disease

|                           | TSH<br>(0.3–3.5 mU/L)     | Free $T_4$<br>(10–25 pmol/L) | Free $T_3$<br>(3.5–7.5 pmol/L) |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Thyrotoxicosis            | ↓ (<0.05 mU/L)            | ↑                            | ↑                              |
| Primary hypothyroidism    | ↑ (>10 mU/L)              | ↓ or low-normal              | ↓ or normal                    |
| TSH deficiency            | ↓ or low-normal           | ↓ or low-normal              | ↓ or normal                    |
| $T_3$ toxicosis           | ↓ (<0.05 mU/L)            | Normal                       | ↑                              |
| Borderline hypothyroidism | Slightly ↑<br>(5–10 mU/L) | Normal                       | Normal                         |

↑, increased; ↓, suppressed

**Autoimmune thyroiditis** may be associated with a goitre (Hashimoto's thyroiditis) or thyroid atrophy. There is cell- and antibody-mediated destruction of thyroid tissue. Almost all patients have serum antibodies to thyroglobulin, thyroid peroxidase enzyme (thyroid microsomal antibodies) and antibodies that block the binding of TSH to its receptor. It is associated with other autoimmune conditions, such as pernicious anaemia and Addison's disease. A normally transient autoimmune thyroiditis can occur postpartum, causing hypo-hyperthyroidism, or both, sequentially.

**Iatrogenic** Thyroidectomy (for treatment of hyperthyroidism or goitre), radioactive iodine treatment or external neck irradiation for head and neck cancer all cause hypothyroidism.

**Drug induced** as a result of carbimazole, lithium, amiodarone and interferon.

**Iodine deficiency** still exists in some areas, particularly mountainous areas (Alps, Himalayas, South America). Goitre, occasionally massive, is common. Iodine excess can also cause hypothyroidism in patients with preexisting thyroid disease.

**Congenital hypothyroidism** is related to thyroid aplasia or dysplasia or defective synthesis of thyroid hormones.

## Clinical features

Symptoms and signs of hypothyroidism are illustrated in Figure 14.6. The term myxoedema refers to the accumulation of mucopolysaccharide in subcutaneous tissues. Features are often difficult to distinguish in elderly people and young women. Hypothyroidism should be excluded in all patients with oligomenorrhoea/amenorrhoea, menorrhagia, infertility and hyperprolactinaemia. Many cases are detected on routine biochemical screening.

## Investigations

Measurement of serum TSH is the investigation of choice. A high TSH with a compatible clinical picture confirms primary hypothyroidism:

- Serum free  $T_4$  levels are low.
- Thyroid antibodies and other organ-specific antibodies may be present in the serum.
- Other features include anaemia (normocytic or macrocytic), hyperlipidaemia, hyponatraemia (due to increased antidiuretic hormone and impaired clearance of free water), and increased serum creatine kinase levels with associated myopathy.

## Management

Treatment is with lifelong levothyroxine at a daily dose of 1.6  $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$  body weight (100–150  $\mu\text{g}$  for an average sized adult, p. 662). The adequacy of replacement is assessed clinically and by thyroid function tests after at least

| Symptoms                                | Signs                          |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>Tiredness/malaise</b>                | <b>Mental slowness</b>         |
| <b>Weight gain</b>                      | Ataxia                         |
| Anorexia                                | Poverty of movement            |
| <b>Cold intolerance</b>                 | Deafness                       |
| Poor memory                             | Psychosis/dementia (rare)      |
| Change in appearance                    | 'Peaches and cream' complexion |
| Depression                              | <b>Dry thin hair</b>           |
| Poor libido                             | Loss of eyebrows               |
| <b>Goitre</b>                           | Hypertension                   |
| Puffy eyes                              | Hypothermia                    |
| Dry, brittle unmanageable hair          | Heart failure                  |
| Dry, coarse skin                        | <b>Bradycardia</b>             |
| Arthralgia                              | Pericardial effusion           |
| Myalgia                                 | Cold peripheries               |
| Muscle weakness/stiffness               | Carpal tunnel syndrome         |
| Constipation                            | Oedema                         |
| Menorrhagia or oligomenorrhoea in women | Periorbital oedema             |
| Psychosis                               | Deep voice                     |
| Coma                                    | Goitre                         |
| Deafness                                | <b>Dry skin</b>                |
|   | Overweight/obesity             |
|   | Myotonia                       |
|   | Muscular hypertrophy           |
|   | Proximal myopathy              |
|   | <b>Slow-relaxing reflexes</b>  |
|   | Anaemia                        |



**Fig. 14.6** Hypothyroidism – symptoms and signs. Bold type indicates signs of greater discriminant value. (A history from a relative is often revealing. Symptoms of other autoimmune disease may be present).

6 weeks on a steady dose. The aim of treatment is normalization of serum TSH concentrations. Annual measurement of TSH is sufficient for patients on a stable dose unless there is a change in situation, e.g. large changes in body weight or pregnancy. In older patients (>60 years) and patients with ischaemic heart disease the starting dose is 25 µg/day and then increased incrementally every 3–6 weeks until euthyroidism is achieved.

### Borderline or subclinical hypothyroidism ('compensated euthyroidism')

This is a slightly increased serum TSH and normal free T<sub>4</sub> concentration (Table 14.2). Most cases are due to early phase chronic autoimmune

thyroiditis and about 2–4% will develop overt hypothyroidism each year. The benefits of treatment, or otherwise, are controversial. Treatment with levothyroxine is normally recommended where the TSH is consistently (i.e. 3 months after the initial test) above 10 mU/L, when there are high-titre thyroid antibodies, lipid abnormalities or when there are symptoms suggestive of hypothyroidism. In untreated patients serum TSH concentrations are measured yearly to look for progression to overt hypothyroidism.

### Myxoedema coma

Severe hypothyroidism may rarely present with confusion and coma, particularly in elderly people. Typical features include hypothermia (p. 659), cardiac failure, hypoventilation, hypoglycaemia and hyponatraemia. The optimal treatment is controversial and data are lacking, but a summary is given in Emergency Box 14.1. Treatment is begun on the basis of clinical suspicion without waiting for the results of laboratory tests. Clues to the possible presence of myxoedema coma include a previous history of thyroid disease and a history from family members suggesting antecedent symptoms of thyroid dysfunction.

### Myxoedema madness

Depression is common but occasionally, with severe hypothyroidism in elderly people, the patient may become frankly demented or psychotic, sometimes with striking delusions. This may occur shortly after starting thyroxine replacement.



## Emergency Box 14.1

### Management of myxoedema coma

#### Investigations

- Serum TSH,  $T_4$  and cortisol before thyroid hormone is given
- Full blood count, serum urea and electrolytes, blood glucose and blood cultures
- ECG monitoring for cardiac arrhythmias

#### Treatment

- $T_3$  orally or intravenously 2.5–5  $\mu\text{g}$  every 8 hours
- Oxygen (by mechanical ventilation if necessary)
- Gradual rewarming (Emergency Box 14.4)
- Hydrocortisone 100 mg i.v. 8-hourly (in case hypothyroidism is a manifestation of hypopituitarism)
- Glucose infusion to prevent hypoglycaemia
- Supportive management of the comatose patient (p. 738)

## Hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism (thyroid overactivity, thyrotoxicosis) is common, affecting 2–5% of all women at some time, mainly between the ages of 20 and 40 years. Three intrinsic thyroid disorders account for the majority of cases of hyperthyroidism: Graves' disease, toxic adenoma and toxic multinodular goitre. Rarer causes include viral thyroiditis (de Quervain's), thyroiditis factitia (surreptitious  $T_4$  consumption), drugs (amiodarone), metastatic differentiated thyroid carcinoma and TSH-secreting tumours (e.g. of the pituitary).

**Graves' disease** is the most common cause of hyperthyroidism and is the result of IgG antibodies binding to the TSH receptor and stimulating thyroid hormone production. It is associated with characteristic clinical features (see below) and other autoimmune diseases, such as pernicious anaemia and myasthenia gravis.

**Toxic multinodular goitre** Many patients with toxic multinodular goitre have been euthyroid for several years before the development of nodular autonomy. It commonly occurs in older women, and drug therapy is rarely successful in inducing a prolonged remission.

**Solitary toxic nodule/adenoma** is responsible for about 5% of cases of hyperthyroidism. Prolonged remission is again rarely induced by drug therapy.

**de Quervain's thyroiditis** Transient hyperthyroidism sometimes results from acute inflammation of the gland, probably as a result of viral infection. It is usually accompanied by fever, malaise and pain in the neck. Treatment is with aspirin, reserving prednisolone for severely symptomatic cases.

**Postpartum thyroiditis** (p. 620).

## Clinical features

Typical symptoms and signs are shown in Figure 14.7. Clinical features vary with age and the underlying aetiology. Ophthalmopathy (see below), pretibial myxoedema (raised, purple-red symmetrical skin lesions over anterolateral aspects of the shins) and thyroid acropachy (clubbing, swollen fingers and periosteal new bone formation) occur only in Graves' disease. Elderly patients may present with atrial fibrillation and/or heart failure, or with a clinical picture resembling hypothyroidism ('apathetic thyrotoxicosis').

## Investigations

- Serum TSH is suppressed ( $<0.05$  mU/L).
- Serum free  $T_4$  and  $T_3$  are elevated. Occasionally  $T_3$  alone is elevated ( $T_3$  toxicosis).
- Serum microsomal and thyroglobulin antibodies are present in most cases of Graves' disease. TSH receptor antibodies are not measured routinely.

| Symptoms                              |
|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Weight loss</b>                    |
| <b>Increased appetite</b>             |
| <b>Irritability</b> /behaviour change |
| Restlessness                          |
| Malaise                               |
| Stiffness                             |
| Muscle weakness                       |
| <b>Tremor</b>                         |
| Choreoathetosis                       |
| Breathlessness                        |
| Palpitation                           |
| <b>Heat intolerance</b>               |
| Itching                               |
| Thirst                                |
| Vomiting                              |
| Diarrhoea                             |
| Eye complaints*                       |
| Goitre                                |
| Oligomenorrhoea                       |
| Loss of libido                        |
| Gynaecomastia                         |
| Onycholysis                           |
| Tall stature (in children)            |
| Sweating                              |
| * Only in Graves' disease             |



| Signs                                     |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| <b>Tremor</b>                             | Proximal myopathy       |
| <b>Hyperkinesia</b>                       | Proximal muscle wasting |
| Psychosis                                 | Onycholysis             |
|   | Palmar erythema         |
| <b>Tachycardia or atrial fibrillation</b> | Graves' dermatopathy*   |
| <b>Full pulse</b>                         | Thyroid acropachy       |
| <b>Warm vasodilated peripheries</b>       | Pretibial myxoedema     |
| Systolic hypertension                     |                         |
| Cardiac failure                           |                         |
| <b>Exophthalmos*</b>                      |                         |
| <b>Lid lag and 'stare'</b>                |                         |
| Conjunctival oedema                       |                         |
| Ophthalmoplegia*                          |                         |
| Periorbital oedema                        |                         |
| <b>Goitre, bruit</b>                      |                         |
| Weight loss                               |                         |
| * Only in Graves' disease                 |                         |

**Fig. 14.7** Hyperthyroidism – symptoms and signs. Bold type indicates signs of greater discriminatory value. \* only in Graves' disease. Additional features are hypercalcaemia and osteoporosis.

- Thyroid ultrasound will help differentiate Graves' disease from a toxic adenoma.

## Management

Three approaches are used to decrease thyroid hormone synthesis: drugs, radioiodine ablation and surgery. Radioiodine is the first-line treatment of choice in the USA and medical treatment in the UK.

**Antithyroid drugs** Carbimazole (20–40 mg daily, p. 663) is most often used in the UK and its metabolite, thiamazole (methimazole) is used in the USA. They block thyroid hormone biosynthesis and also have immunosuppressive effects which will affect the Graves' disease process. As clinical benefit is not apparent for 10–20 days,  $\beta$ -blockers (usually propranolol) are used to provide rapid symptomatic control because many manifestations are mediated via the sympathetic system. After 4–6 weeks at full dose, carbimazole is gradually reduced over 6–24 months to 5 mg daily and discontinued when the patient is euthyroid. The aim of treatment during this time is to maintain normal free  $T_4$  and TSH levels. Fifty per cent of patients with Graves' disease relapse on discontinuation of drug treatment, mostly within the following 2 years and then need further treatment (long-term antithyroid drugs, radioactive iodine or surgery). The most severe side-effect of carbimazole is agranulocytosis. All patients starting treatment must be warned to stop carbimazole and seek an urgent blood count if they develop a sore throat or unexplained fever. If toxicity occurs propylthiouracil is used instead.

**Radioactive iodine** (oral sodium  $^{131}\text{I}$ ) is widely used for the treatment of hyperthyroidism but is contraindicated in pregnancy and while breast feeding. It accumulates in the gland and results in local irradiation and tissue damage with return to normal thyroid function over 4–12 weeks. If hyperthyroidism persists, a further dose of  $^{131}\text{I}$  can be given, although this increases the rate of subsequent hypothyroidism.

**Surgery** Subtotal thyroidectomy should only be performed in patients who have been rendered euthyroid. Antithyroid drugs are stopped 10–14 days before the operation and replaced with oral potassium iodide, which inhibits thyroid hormone release and reduces the vascularity of the gland. Complications of surgery include bleeding, hypocalcaemia, hypothyroidism, hypoparathyroidism, recurrent laryngeal nerve palsy and recurrent hyperthyroidism.

The choice of therapy for hyperthyroidism depends on patient preference and local expertise. Surgery is particularly indicated in patients who have a large goitre, in patients who have drug side-effects or poor compliance with drug therapy but do not want radioiodine, or if there is a suspicion of malignancy in a nodule. Lifelong measurement of TSH to look for hypothyroidism is indicated after surgery or radioiodine treatment.

## Thyroid crisis or 'thyroid storm'

This is a rare life-threatening condition in which there is a rapid deterioration of thyrotoxicosis with hyperpyrexia, tachycardia, extreme restlessness and eventually delirium, coma and death. It is usually precipitated by infection, stress, and surgery or radioactive iodine therapy in an unprepared patient. With careful management it should no longer occur and most cases referred to as 'crisis' are simply severe but uncomplicated thyrotoxicosis. Treatment of thyroid storm is with large doses of carbimazole (20 mg 8-hourly orally), propranolol (80 mg 12-hourly orally), potassium iodide (15 mg 6-hourly orally, to block acutely the release of thyroid hormone from the gland) and hydrocortisone (100 mg i.v. 6-hourly, to inhibit peripheral conversion of  $T_4$  to  $T_3$ ).

## Ophthalmic Graves' disease

Lid retraction (white of sclera visible above the cornea as the patient looks forwards) and lid lag (delay in moving the upper eyelid as the eye moves downwards) are a result of increased catecholamine sensitivity of the levator palpebrae superioris and occur in any form of hyperthyroidism. Exophthalmos (proptosis, protruding eyeballs) and ophthalmoplegia (limitation of eye movements) only occur in patients with Graves' disease (ophthalmic Graves' disease).

## Aetiology

T lymphocytes react with one or more antigens (likely to be the TSH receptor) shared by the thyroid and orbit and trigger a cascade of events leading to retro-orbital inflammation. There is swelling and oedema of the extraocular muscles leading to limitation of movement and proptosis. Ultimately increased pressure on the optic nerve may cause optic atrophy. Ophthalmopathy is more common and more severe in smokers.

## Clinical features

Eye involvement is usually bilateral. Symptoms are pressure or pain in the eye, a gritty sensation, decreased vision and photophobia. Exophthalmos and ophthalmoplegia are direct effects of retro-orbital inflammation, whereas conjunctival oedema (chemosis), lid lag and corneal scarring are secondary to the proptosis and lack of eye cover (Fig. 14.8). Eye manifestations do not parallel the clinical course of Graves' disease and may appear before or after the onset of hyperthyroidism.

## Investigations

The diagnosis is usually made clinically by finding typical clinical features on a background of Graves' disease. MRI of the orbits will exclude other causes of





- Grade 0 No signs or symptoms
- Grade 1 Only signs, no symptoms
- Grade 2 Soft tissue involvement
- Grade 3 Proptosis (measured with exophthalmometer)
- Grade 4 Extraocular muscle involvement
- Grade 5 Corneal involvement
- Grade 6 Sight loss with optic nerve involvement

**Fig. 14.8** The eye signs of Graves' disease.

proptosis, e.g. retro-orbital tumour, and show enlarged muscles and oedema. Visual acuity and visual fields should be formally assessed in all patients.

## Management

Thyroid dysfunction should be corrected and hypothyroidism avoided because this may exacerbate the eye problem. Smoking should be stopped. Specific treatment includes artificial tears and for severe symptoms, high-dose systemic steroids (e.g. prednisolone 30–120 mg daily) to reduce inflammation. Surgical treatment may be necessary to sew the eyelids partially together to protect the cornea, to perform corrective eye muscle surgery to improve diplopia or to decompress the orbit particularly if sight is threatened. Occasionally irradiation of the orbits or surgical decompression of the orbit(s) is required.

## Goitre (thyroid enlargement)

Goitre is more common in women than in men and may be physiological or pathological in origin (Table 14.3). The presence of a goitre gives no indication about the thyroid status of the patient.

## Clinical features

A goitre is usually noticed as a cosmetic defect, although discomfort and pain in the neck can occur, and occasionally tracheal or oesophageal compression produces difficulty in breathing or dysphagia. The gland may be diffusely enlarged, multinodular or possess a solitary nodule. A bruit may be present and associated lymphadenopathy suggests that the goitre may be malignant.

**Table 14.3** Goitre – causes and types

| Diffuse  |
|--|
| Physiological:* puberty, pregnancy                   |
| Autoimmune: Graves' disease, Hashimoto's disease     |
| Acute viral thyroiditis (de Quervain's thyroiditis)* |
| Iodine deficiency (endemic goitre)                   |
| Dyshormonogenesis                                    |
| Goitrogens, e.g. sulphonylureas                      |
| Nodular  |
| Multinodular goitre                                  |
| Solitary nodule                                      |
| Fibrotic (Riedel's thyroiditis)                      |
| Cysts  |
| Tumours  |
| Adenoma  |
| Carcinoma  |
| Lymphoma   |
| Miscellaneous  |
| Sarcoidosis  |
| Tuberculosis   |
| <i>*Goitre usually resolves spontaneously</i>        |

## Investigations

The purpose of investigations, together with the history and physical examination, is to determine the patient's thyroid status and the pathological nature of the goitre:

- **Blood tests:** thyroid function tests (Table 14.2) and thyroid antibodies
- **Imaging:** high-resolution thyroid ultrasound can delineate nodules and determine whether they are cystic or solid. Both types of nodule are usually benign, but can be malignant, and thus require fine needle aspiration (see below) under ultrasound control. Chest and thoracic inlet X-rays to detect tracheal compression and large retrosternal extensions, are performed in patients with very large goitre or clinical symptoms (difficulty in breathing)
- **Fine-needle aspiration** for cytology should be performed for solitary nodules or a dominant nodule in a multinodular goitre because there is a 5% chance of malignancy
- **Thyroid scan** ( $^{125}\text{I}$  or  $^{131}\text{I}$ ) distinguishes between a functioning (rarely malignant) or non-functioning (10% malignant) nodule. However, FNA has largely replaced isotope scans.

**Table 14.4** Characteristics of thyroid cancer

| Cell type           | Behaviour      | Spread               | Prognosis    |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Papillary (70%)     | Young people   | Local                | Good         |
| Follicular (20%)    | Middle age     | Lung/bone            | Usually good |
| Anaplastic (<5%)    | Aggressive     | Local                | Very poor    |
| Lymphoma (2%)       | Variable       |                      | Usually poor |
| Medullary cell (5%) | Often familial | Local and metastases | Poor         |

*Frequency of tumour type is given as a percentage in brackets. Medullary cell carcinoma (see multiple endocrine neoplasia, p. 658)*

## Management

Treatment is usually not required, apart from inducing euthyroidism if necessary. Surgical intervention is required for the cosmetic effects of large goitres, pressure effects on the trachea or oesophagus, or confirmed (positive FNA) or possible malignancy (negative FNA but rapid growth, cervical lymphadenopathy).

### Thyroid malignancy

Thyroid cancer is uncommon and most present as asymptomatic thyroid nodules. The first sign of disease is occasionally lymph-node metastases or, in rare cases, lung or bone metastases. Features that suggest carcinoma in a patient presenting with a thyroid nodule are a history of progressive increase in size, a hard and irregular nodule, and the presence of enlarged lymph nodes on examination. Characteristics are listed in Table 14.4. Fine-needle aspiration cytology is the best test for distinguishing between benign and malignant thyroid nodules. Treatment of follicular and papillary cancers is total thyroidectomy with neck dissection for local nodal spread. Ablative radioactive iodine is subsequently given which will be taken up by remaining thyroid tissue or metastatic lesions. External radiotherapy may produce brief respite for anaplastic carcinoma and lymphoma but otherwise treatment is largely palliative.

## MALE REPRODUCTION AND SEX

Gonadotrophin-releasing hormone (GnRH, also called luteinizing hormone-RH) is released episodically from the hypothalamus (during and after puberty) and stimulates LH and FSH secretion from the anterior pituitary gland. LH stimulates testosterone production from Leydig cells of the testis. Testosterone circulates bound to sex hormone-binding globulin and acts via nuclear androgen receptors to produce male secondary sex characteristics (growth of

pubic, axillary and facial hair, enlargement of the external genitalia, deepening of the voice, muscle growth and frontal balding) and maintenance of libido. FSH stimulates the testes to produce mature sperm and the inhibins A and B; the latter feed back to the pituitary to inhibit FSH.

## Male hypogonadism

Hypogonadism in a male results from disease of the testes (primary hypogonadism) or disease of the pituitary or hypothalamus (secondary hypogonadism). Occasionally there is a defect in the ability to respond to testosterone (Table 14.5). The clinical features are due to subfertility and androgen deficiency. The presentation depends on the age of onset of hypogonadism (Table 14.6). In prepubertal onset the patient presents with delayed puberty and eunuchoid body proportions (long legs relative to upper body and long arms relative to overall height) resulting from the continued growth of long bones, which occurs because of delayed fusion of the epiphyses.

**Klinefelter's syndrome** is the most common congenital abnormality causing primary hypogonadism, with an incidence of 1 in 1000 live births. It

**Table 14.5** Causes of male hypogonadism

### Reduced gonadotrophins (hypothalamic-pituitary disease)

Hypopituitarism  
 Selective gonadotrophic deficiency (Kallman's syndrome)  
 Severe systemic illness  
 Severe underweight

### Hyperprolactinaemia

Interferes with pulsatile secretion of LH and FSH

### Primary gonadal disease (congenital)

Anorchia/Leydig cell agenesis  
 Cryptorchidism (testicular maldescent)  
 Chromosome abnormality (e.g. Klinefelter's syndrome)  
 Enzyme defects: 5 $\alpha$ -reductase deficiency

### Primary gonadal disease (acquired)

Testicular torsion sickle cell disease  
 Orchiectomy  
 Chemotherapy/radiation toxicity  
 Orchitis (e.g. mumps)  
 Chronic kidney disease  
 Cirrhosis/alcohol  
 Sickle cell disease

### Androgen-receptor deficiency/abnormality

**Table 14.6** Consequences of androgen deficiency in the male

|  |
|--|
| Loss of libido   |
| High-pitched voice (if prepubertal)                        |
| No temporal recession of hair                              |
| Thinning and loss of facial, axillary, pubic and limb hair |
| Loss of erections/ejaculations                             |
| Small soft testes  |
| Poorly developed penis/scrotum                             |
| Subfertility   |
| Increased height and arm span (if prepubertal)             |
| Decreased muscle bulk                                      |
| Osteoporosis   |
| Gynaecomastia  |

is the result of the presence of an extra X chromosome (47, XXY). Accelerated atrophy of the testicular germ cells gives rise to sterility and small firm testes. The clinical picture varies: in the most severely affected there is complete failure of sexual maturation, eunuchoid body proportions, gynaecomastia and learning difficulties.

**Congenital deficiency of gonadotrophin-releasing hormone (GnRH)** may occur in isolation, or be associated anosmia (absent sense of smell), colour blindness, cleft palate and renal abnormalities, in which case it is referred to as Kallmann's syndrome.

## Investigations

A low or low-normal serum testosterone confirms the clinical diagnosis of hypogonadism. Supranormal serum concentrations of FSH and LH indicate that the patient has primary hypogonadism (testicular disease), and normal or low levels of FSH/LH indicate disease of the pituitary or hypothalamus (secondary hypogonadism). Further investigations, e.g. serum prolactin, chromosomal analysis (e.g. to exclude Klinefelter's syndrome), pituitary MRI scan and pituitary function tests, will depend on the likely site of the defect.

## Management

The cause can rarely be reversed and the mainstay of treatment is androgen replacement as testosterone. Patients with hypothalamic-pituitary disease are given LH and FSH or pulsatile GnRH when fertility is desired.

### Loss of libido and erectile dysfunction

Erectile dysfunction is defined as failure to initiate an erection or to maintain an erection until ejaculation. Erection is the result of increased vascularity of

the penis controlled via the sacral parasympathetic outflow; it may be impaired by vascular disease, autonomic neuropathy (most commonly from diabetes mellitus) and nerve damage after pelvic surgery. The nervous pathways for ejaculation are centred on the lumbar sympathetics, and abnormalities may occur with autonomic neuropathy and traumatic nerve damage. Psychological factors, endocrine factors (causes of hypogonadism described above), alcohol and drugs, e.g. cannabis, and diuretics may cause abnormalities of both parasympathetic and sympathetic nerves. A careful history and examination will identify the cause in many patients. The presence of nocturnal emissions and morning erections is suggestive of psychogenic erectile dysfunction.

Offending drugs should be stopped. Phosphodiesterase type-5 inhibitors (sildenafil, tadalafil, vardenafil) which increase penile blood flow are usually first choice for therapy. Other methods of treatment include apomorphine, intracavernosal injections of alprostadil, papaverine or phentolamine, vacuum expanders and penile implants.

Many cases are the result of psychological factors, and the patient may respond to psychosexual counselling.

## Gynaecomastia

Gynaecomastia is development of breast tissue in the male. It results from an increase in the oestrogen:androgen ratio (Table 14.7) and is most commonly a result of liver disease or drug side-effects. Gynaecomastia is also seen in early puberty as a result of relative oestrogen excess, and usually resolves spontaneously. Unexplained gynaecomastia may occur, especially in elderly people, and is a diagnosis of exclusion after examination and investigation. The treatment in other cases is either of the underlying cause or by removal of the drug if possible. Occasionally surgery is needed.

## FEMALE REPRODUCTION AND SEX

In the adult female higher brain centres impose a menstrual cycle of 28 days upon the activity of hypothalamic GnRH. Pulses of GnRH stimulate the release of pituitary LH and FSH. LH stimulates ovarian androgen production and FSH stimulates follicular development and aromatase activity (an enzyme required to convert ovarian androgens to oestrogens). Oestrogens are necessary for normal pubertal development and, together with progesterone, for maintenance of the menstrual cycle; they also have effects on a variety of tissues.

## The menopause

The menopause, or cessation of periods, naturally occurs about the age of 45–55 years. During the late 40s, first FSH and then LH concentrations begin to rise, probably as a result of diminishing follicle supply. Oestrogen levels

**Table 14.7** Causes of gynaecomastia

|  |
|--|
| <b>Physiological</b>   |
| Neonatal, resulting from the influence of maternal hormones<br>Pubertal<br>Old age |
| <b>Deficient testosterone secretion</b>  |
| Any cause of hypogonadism (Table 14.6)   |
| <b>Oestrogen-producing tumours</b>   |
| Of the testis or adrenal gland   |
| <b>HCG-producing tumours</b>   |
| Of the testis or the lung  |
| <b>Drugs</b>   |
| Oestrogenic: oestrogens, digoxin, cannabis, diamorphine                            |
| Anti-androgens: spironolactone, cimetidine, cyproterone,                           |
| Others: gonadotrophins, cytotoxics   |
| <b>Other</b>   |
| Hyperthyroidism<br>Carcinoma of the breast   |
| <i>HCG, human chorionic gonadotrophin</i>  |

fall and the cycle becomes disrupted. Menopause may also occur surgically, with radiotherapy to the ovaries and with ovarian disease (e.g. premature menopause in the 20s and 30s). Symptoms of the menopause are hot flushes, vaginal dryness and breast atrophy. There may also be vague symptoms of depression, loss of libido and weight gain. There is loss of bone density (osteoporosis) and the premenopausal protection against ischaemic heart disease disappears.

Oestrogen replacement is the most effective treatment available for the relief of menopausal symptoms and also reduces the risk of colorectal cancer and osteoporotic fractures. However, HRT increases the risk of breast cancer, coronary heart disease (CHD), stroke and venous thromboembolism. Oestrogens, when given alone (without progestogens), increase the risk of endometrial cancer. The main indication for HRT is for control of menopausal symptoms with the lowest effective dose for the shortest time possible. It is not recommended purely for prevention of postmenopausal osteoporosis and bisphosphonates or selective oestrogen receptor modulators (SERMs), e.g. raloxifene are the preferred treatment. SERMs have the advantage of positive oestrogen effects on bone with no effect on oestrogen receptors of breast and uterus. HRT is used in premature ovarian failure (before age 40 years)

when the benefits of treatment outweigh the risks. HRT is contraindicated in women with a history of thromboembolism, stroke, CHD or breast cancer.

## Female hypogonadism and amenorrhoea

Amenorrhoea is the absence of menstruation. It is often physiological, e.g. during pregnancy and lactation, and after the menopause. Primary amenorrhoea is failure to start spontaneous menstruation by the age of 16 years. Secondary amenorrhoea is the absence of menstruation for 3 months in a woman who has previously had menstrual cycles. In the female, hypogonadism almost always presents as amenorrhoea or oligomenorrhoea (fewer than nine menses per year). The other features of oestrogen deficiency include atrophy of the breasts and vagina, loss of pubic hair and osteoporosis.

### Aetiology

The causes of amenorrhoea are listed in Table 14.8. Polycystic ovary syndrome is the most common cause of oligomenorrhoea and amenorrhoea in clinical practice, though one should always consider pregnancy as a possible

**Table 14.8** Pathological causes of amenorrhoea

#### Hypothalamic

GnRH deficiency (isolated or as part of Kallmann's syndrome)\*  
Weight loss, physical exercise, stress  
Post oral contraceptive therapy

#### Pituitary

Hyperprolactinaemia  
Hypopituitarism

#### Gonadal

Polycystic ovary syndrome  
Premature ovarian failure – autoimmune basis  
Defective ovarian development (dysgenesis)\*  
Androgen-secreting ovarian tumours  
Radiotherapy

#### Other diseases

Thyroid dysfunction  
Cushing's syndrome  
Adrenal tumours  
Severe illness

#### Uterine/vaginal abnormality

Imperforate hymen or absent uterus\*

\*Presents as primary amenorrhoea



cause. Severe weight loss (e.g. anorexia nervosa) has long been associated with amenorrhoea, but less severe forms of weight loss (by dieting and exercise) are a common cause of amenorrhoea caused by abnormal secretion of GnRH.

## Investigations

The cause of amenorrhoea may be apparent after a full history and examination. Basal levels of serum FSH, LH, oestrogen and prolactin will allow a distinction between primary gonadal and hypothalamic–pituitary causes. Further investigations, e.g. ultrasonography of the ovaries, laparoscopy and ovarian biopsy, pituitary MRI and measurement of serum testosterone, will depend on the probable site of the defect and the findings on clinical examination.

## Management

Treatment is of the cause where possible, e.g. increase weight, treat hypothyroidism and hyperprolactinaemia. In patients where the underlying defect cannot be corrected, cyclical oestrogens are given to reverse the symptoms of oestrogen deficiency and prevent early osteoporosis. Patients with isolated GnRH deficiency or hypopituitarism are treated with human FSH/LH. The management of polycystic ovaries is discussed below.

## Hirsutism and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

Hirsutism is excess hair growth in women in a male pattern (androgen dependent): beard area, abdominal wall, thigh, axilla and around the nipples. Hirsutism should be differentiated from *hypertrichosis* which is androgen independent and refers to a general increase in body hair; this can be racial (the Mediterranean and some Asian Indian subcontinent populations), caused by drugs (e.g. ciclosporin, minoxidil, phenytoin) or anorexia nervosa, or may be familial.

Hirsutism indicates increased androgen production by the ovaries or adrenal glands most commonly PCOS. Rarer causes are congenital adrenal hyperplasia, ovarian or adrenal androgen-secreting tumour, prolactinoma and Cushing's disease. Signs of virilization (clitoromegaly, recent-onset frontal balding, deepening of the voice and loss of female body shape) implies substantial androgen excess, and usually indicates a cause other than PCOS.

PCOS is one of the most common hormonal disorders affecting women. It is characterized by multiple small cysts within the ovary (which represent arrested follicular development) and by excess androgen production from the ovaries and, to a lesser extent, from the adrenals. PCOS is frequently associated with hyperinsulinaemia and insulin resistance and there is an increased frequency of type 2 diabetes mellitus. It is also associated with hypertension, hyperlipidaemia and increased cardiovascular disease. The

precise mechanisms that link this syndrome remain to be elucidated, but may play a role in the causation of macrovascular disease in women.

## Clinical features

Typically PCOS presents with amenorrhoea or oligomenorrhoea (menstrual cycles longer than 35 days or fewer than 10 periods a year), hirsutism and acne, usually beginning shortly after menarche. It is sometimes associated with marked obesity, but weight may be normal. Mild virilization occurs in severe cases.

## Criteria for diagnosis

Diagnostic criteria for PCOS have been proposed by several groups. In the Rotterdam criteria the diagnosis of PCOS is made when two of the following three criteria are present and other differentials (androgen-secreting tumour, Cushing's syndrome, congenital adrenal hyperplasia) are excluded:

- Menstrual irregularity (amenorrhoea or oligomenorrhoea) due to oligo- and/or anovulation.
- Clinical (hirsutism, acne, frontal balding) or biochemical evidence of hyperandrogenism.
- Polycystic ovaries (multiple cysts) on ultrasound examination.

## Investigations and differential diagnosis

- Sex hormones – serum total testosterone concentration may be normal in PCOS and fail to detect biochemical hyperandrogenism. This is because sex hormone binding globulin (which affects total testosterone concentration) is suppressed leading to high free (i.e. bioavailable) testosterone levels. Biochemical evidence of hyperandrogenism is demonstrated by a *raised free androgen index* (serum total testosterone/sex hormone binding globulin concentration) which is a measure of bioavailable testosterone. Total testosterone concentrations more than 1.5–2 times the upper limit of normal or a history of rapid virilisation are likely to be associated with an androgen secreting tumour of the ovaries or adrenal glands.
- Serum prolactin is slightly elevated in PCOS but values more than 1.5–2 times the upper limit of normal suggest pituitary or hypothalamic disease.
- Serum 17-hydroxyprogesterone is elevated in patients with non-classic congenital adrenal hyperplasia.
- Transvaginal ultrasound gives good visualization of the ovaries.

## Management

**Local therapy for hirsutism** Excess hair can be removed or disguised by shaving, bleaching and waxing.

### Systemic therapy for hirsutism

- Oestrogens, e.g. oral contraceptives, suppress ovarian androgen production and reduce free androgen by increasing sex hormone-binding globulin levels.
- Cyproterone acetate and flutamide are both antiandrogens. The latter is less commonly used because of a high incidence of hepatic side-effects.
- Spironolactone has antiandrogen activity.
- Finasteride, a  $5\alpha$ -reductase inhibitor, inhibits dihydrotestosterone formation in skin.

**Treatment of menstrual disturbance** Cyclical oestrogen/progesterone administration regulates the menstrual cycle in addition to improving hirsutism. Metformin improves hyperinsulinaemia, regulates the menstrual cycle and helps weight loss.

**Treatment for infertility** Patients with PCOS who require induction of ovulation are treated with the anti-oestrogen, clomifene

## THE GLUCOCORTICOID AXIS

The adrenal gland consists of an outer cortex producing steroids (cortisol, aldosterone and androgens) and an inner medulla secreting catecholamines. Aldosterone secretion is under the control of the renin–angiotensin system (see later). Corticotrophin-releasing hormone (CRH) from the hypothalamus stimulates ACTH (from the anterior pituitary), which stimulates cortisol production by the adrenal cortex. Cortisol feeds back on the hypothalamus and pituitary to inhibit further CRH/ACTH release. CRH release, and hence cortisol release, is in response to a circadian rhythm (light-dark), stress and other factors. Random 'one-off serum cortisol measurements may therefore be misleading in the diagnosis of hypoadrenalism or Cushing's syndrome. Cortisol has many effects, particularly on carbohydrate metabolism. It leads to increased protein catabolism, increased deposition of fat and glycogen, sodium retention, increased renal potassium loss and a diminished host response to infection.

*Synthetic steroids* are widely used in the treatment of a variety of inflammatory disorders and replacement therapy in adrenal insufficiency. They differ in their structure and potency and include cortisol, prednisolone, methylprednisolone and dexamethasone. Fludrocortisone is produced by modification of hydrocortisone. It has potent mineralocorticoid activity and is used to replace natural aldosterone in patients with primary adrenal insufficiency.

### Addison's disease: primary hypoadrenalism

This is a rare condition in which there is destruction of the entire adrenal cortex.

## Aetiology

More than 90% of cases result from destruction of the entire adrenal cortex by organ-specific autoantibodies. This is associated with other autoimmune conditions, e.g. autoimmune thyroid disease, ovarian failure, pernicious anaemia and type 1 diabetes mellitus. Rarer causes are adrenal gland tuberculosis, surgical removal, haemorrhage (in meningococcal septicaemia), and malignant infiltration. Primary hypoadrenalism must be differentiated from secondary (to pituitary disease) or tertiary (to hypothalamic disease) adrenocortical failure or after prolonged corticosteroid treatment for non-endocrine conditions (p. 665).

## Clinical features

There is an insidious presentation with non-specific symptoms of lethargy, depression, anorexia and weight loss. Postural hypotension caused by salt and water loss is an early sign. Hyperpigmentation (buccal mucosa, pressure points, skin creases and recent scars) results from stimulation of melanocytes by excess ACTH in primary hypoadrenalism. There may be vitiligo and loss of body hair in women because of the dependence on adrenal androgens. Hypoadrenalism may also present as an emergency (Addisonian crisis), with vomiting, abdominal pain, profound weakness, hypoglycaemia and hypovolaemic shock.

## Investigations

Investigations are threefold: to demonstrate inappropriately low cortisol secretion, to determine if cortisol deficiency is independent or dependent on ACTH secretion, i.e. primary or secondary/tertiary hypoadrenalism, and to determine the specific cause of the adrenal failure:

- Single cortisol measurements – a random daytime cortisol below 100 nmol/L is highly suggestive and above 550 nmol/L makes the diagnosis unlikely, but single values are not usually helpful.
- The short ACTH (tetracosactide) stimulation test is the key diagnostic investigation and demonstrates failure of exogenous ACTH to increase plasma cortisol (Table 14.9). However, it does not differentiate primary from secondary hypoadrenalism.
- Plasma ACTH level – a high level (>80 ng/L at 0900 h) with low or low-normal cortisol confirms primary hypoadrenalism. Reduced ACTH and cortisol indicate secondary or tertiary hypoadrenalism.
- The long ACTH stimulation test is used to diagnose secondary hypoadrenalism or adrenal suppression by steroids.
- Adrenal antibodies are detected in most cases of autoimmune adrenalitis.

**Table 14.9** Tetracosactide stimulation tests**Short test**

1. Take blood for measurement of plasma cortisol
2. Administer tetracosactide 250 µg i.m./i.v.
3. Take blood for measurement of cortisol after 30 minutes
4. Interpretation: adrenal insufficiency is excluded if the basal plasma cortisol exceeds 170 nmol/L and exceeds 600 nmol/L at 30 minutes. Further tests (plasma ACTH and long synacthen test) are needed to establish the cause of hypoadrenalism.

**Long test**

1. Take blood for measurement of plasma cortisol
2. Administer tetracosactide 1 mg i.m.
3. Take blood for cortisol at hourly intervals for 5 hours, then at 8 and 24 hours
4. Interpretation: patients with normal adrenal glands reach a plasma cortisol concentration of over 1000 nmol/L by 4 hours with a rise of >550 nmol/L over baseline. In patients with Addison's disease the cortisol response is impaired throughout, and in secondary adrenal insufficiency a delayed but normal response is seen.

- Other tests include hyponatraemia, hyperkalaemia. A raised urea and hypoglycaemia are occasionally seen. Serum calcium may be high.
- Chest and abdominal X-rays may show evidence of tuberculosis, with calcified adrenals.

Addisonian crisis is a life-threatening emergency that requires immediate treatment before full investigation (Emergency Box 14.2). Treatment should begin on the basis of clinical suspicion without waiting for the results of laboratory tests.

## Management

This is with lifelong steroid replacement taken as tablets:

- *Hydrocortisone*. The usual dose is 20 mg on waking and 10 mg in the evening, which mimics the normal diurnal rhythm. The dose is best monitored by measuring a series of cortisol levels throughout the day.
- *Fludrocortisone*, a synthetic mineralocorticoid, 50–300 µg daily. The dose is adequate when serum electrolytes are normal, there is no postural drop in blood pressure and plasma renin levels are suppressed to within the normal range.

Patients should wear a Medic Alert bracelet or necklace and carry the medical information card supplied with it. Both should indicate the diagnosis, daily medications and doses. They should also keep an (up-to-date) ampoule of

**Emergency Box 14.2****Management of acute hypoadrenalism****Investigations**

- Take blood for plasma cortisol and ACTH before administration of hydrocortisone
- Full blood count, urea and electrolytes, blood glucose, serum calcium and blood cultures

**Immediate**

- Hydrocortisone 100 mg intravenously
- 0.9% saline, 1 L over 30–60 minutes
- 50 mL of 50% dextrose if hypoglycaemic
- Search for precipitating cause, e.g. infection, gastroenteritis

**Subsequent**

- Hydrocortisone 100 mg intramuscular 6-hourly until BP stable and vomiting ceased
- 0.9% saline 2–4 L intravenously in 12–24 hours; monitor by JVP or CVP
- Expect recovery, with normal BP, blood glucose and serum sodium, within 12–24 hours
- When stable, convert to oral maintenance treatment continued lifelong

hydrocortisone at home in case of major illness or if they are unable to take their oral medication due to vomiting. In a normal individual, stress of any type, e.g. infection, trauma and surgery, causes an immediate and marked increase in ACTH and hence in cortisol. This is a necessary response and therefore it is essential in patients on steroid replacement that the dose is increased when they are placed in any of these situations. The usual dose is 100 mg hydrocortisone intramuscularly for minor surgery and, for major surgery 100 mg hydrocortisone 6-hourly until oral medication is resumed. The dose is doubled during minor illness.

**Uses and problems of therapeutic steroid therapy**

In addition to their use as therapeutic replacement for deficiency states, steroids are widely used for a variety of non-endocrine conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease, asthma and rheumatological conditions. Long-term steroid use is associated with side-effects (Table 14.9) and also results in suppression of the adrenal axis if used continually for more than 3–4 weeks. All patients receiving steroids should carry a 'Steroid Card' and should be made aware of the following points:

- Steroid therapy must never be stopped suddenly unless treatment has been for less than 2–3 weeks. After 3 weeks doses should be reduced very gradually.
- Doses should be doubled in times of serious intercurrent illness.
- Other physicians, anaesthetists and dentists must be told about steroid therapy.

Patients should also be informed of potential side-effects and this information should be documented in the patient records. The clinical need for high-dose steroids should be continually and critically assessed. Steroid-sparing agents (e.g. azathioprine) should always be considered and screening and prophylactic therapy for osteoporosis introduced.

## Secondary hypoadrenalism

This may arise from hypothalamic–pituitary disease or from long-term steroid therapy leading to hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal suppression. The clinical features are the same as those of Addison’s disease but there is no pigmentation because ACTH levels are low and, in pituitary disease, there are usually features of failure of other pituitary hormones. A long ACTH test (Table 14.10) will differentiate between primary and secondary adrenal failure. Treatment is with hydrocortisone; fludrocortisone is unnecessary. If adrenal failure is secondary to long-term steroid therapy, the adrenals will recover if steroids are withdrawn very slowly.

## Cushing’s syndrome

Cushing’s syndrome is caused by persistently and inappropriately elevated circulating glucocorticoid levels. Most cases result from administration of synthetic steroids or ACTH for the treatment of medical conditions, e.g. asthma. Spontaneous Cushing’s syndrome is rare and two-thirds of cases result from excess ACTH secretion from the pituitary gland (Table 14.11). Cushing’s disease must be distinguished from Cushing’s syndrome. The latter is a general term which refers to the abnormalities resulting from a chronic excess of glucocorticoids whatever the cause, whereas Cushing’s disease specifically refers to excess glucocorticoids resulting from inappropriate ACTH secretion from the pituitary (usually a microadenoma, less often corticotrophin hyperplasia). Alcohol excess mimics Cushing’s syndrome clinically and biochemically (pseudo-Cushing’s syndrome). The pathogenesis is incompletely understood but the features resolve when alcohol is stopped.

## Clinical features

Patients are obese: fat distribution is typically central, affecting the trunk, abdomen and neck (buffalo hump). They have a plethoric complexion with a

**Table 14.10** Adverse effects of corticosteroids

| <b>Physiological</b>                         |  |
|--|--|
| Adrenal and/or pituitary suppression         |  |
| <b>Pathological</b>                          |  |
| <i>Cardiovascular</i>                        | <i>Endocrine</i>                               |
| Increased blood pressure                     | Weight gain                                    |
|  | Glycosuria, hyperglycaemia (diabetes mellitus) |
| <i>Gastrointestinal</i>                      | Impaired growth in children                    |
| Peptic ulceration exacerbation (possibly)    |  |
| Acute pancreatitis                           | <i>Bone and muscle</i>                         |
|  | Osteoporosis                                   |
| <i>Renal</i>                                 | Proximal myopathy and wasting                  |
| Polyuria                                     | Aseptic necrosis of the hip                    |
| Nocturia                                     | Pathological fractures                         |
|  |  |
| <i>Central nervous</i>                       | <i>Skin</i>                                    |
| Depression                                   | Thinning                                       |
| Euphoria                                     | Easy bruising                                  |
| Psychosis                                    |  |
| Insomnia                                     | <i>Eyes</i>                                    |
|  | Cataracts                                      |
| <i>Increased susceptibility to infection</i> |  |
| (signs and fever are frequently masked)      |  |
| Septicaemia                                  |  |
| Reactivation of tuberculosis                 |  |
| Skin (e.g. fungi)                            |  |
| Oral candida (including with inhaled drugs)  |  |

moon face. Many of the features are the result of the protein-catabolic effects of cortisol: the skin is thin and bruises easily and there are purple striae on the abdomen, breasts and thighs (Fig. 14.9). Pigmentation occurs with ACTH-dependent cases. Patients with ectopic production of ACTH tend to have rapidly progressive symptoms and signs and have evidence of the primary tumour.



**Table 14.11** Causes of Cushing's syndrome**ACTH-dependent causes**

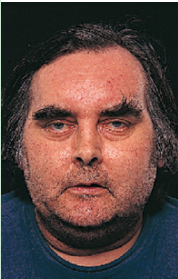

Pituitary-dependent (Cushing's disease)  
 Ectopic ACTH-producing tumours (small-cell lung cancer, carcinoid tumours)  
 ACTH administration

**Non-ACTH-dependent causes**

Adrenal adenomas  
 Adrenal carcinomas  
 Glucocorticoid administration

**Others**

Alcohol-induced pseudo-Cushing's syndrome

| Symptoms                      |   | Signs   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Weight gain (central)         |   | Moon face   |
| Change of appearance          |   | <b>Plethora</b>   |
| Depression                    |   | Depression/psychosis  |
| Insomnia                      |   | Acne  |
| Amenorrhoea/oligomenorrhoea   |   | Hirsutism   |
| Poor libido                   |   | Frontal balding (female)                                      |
| Thin skin/easy bruising       |   | <b>Thin skin</b>  |
| Hair growth/acne              |   | <b>Bruising</b>   |
| Muscular weakness             |   | Poor wound healing  |
| Growth arrest in children     |   | Pigmentation  |
| Back pain                     |   | Skin infections   |
| Polyuria/polydipsia           |   | <b>Hypertension</b>   |
| Psychosis                     |   | Osteoporosis  |
| Old photographs may be useful |  | <b>Pathological fractures (especially vertebrae and ribs)</b> |
|                               |   | Kyphosis  |
|                               |   | 'Buffalo hump' (dorsal fat pad)                               |
|                               |   | Central obesity   |
|                               |   | <b>Striae (purple or red)</b>                                 |
|                               |   | Rib fractures   |
|                               |   | Oedema  |
|                               |   | <b>Proximal myopathy</b>                                      |
|                               |   | Proximal muscle wasting                                       |
|                               |   | Glycosuria  |

**Fig. 14.9** Cushing's syndrome – symptoms and signs. Bold type indicates signs of most value in discriminating Cushing's syndrome from simple obesity and hirsutism.

## Investigations

In a patient with suspected spontaneous Cushing's syndrome the purpose of investigation is firstly to confirm the presence of cortisol excess, and secondly to determine the cause.

### Confirm raised cortisol

- The *48-hour low-dose dexamethasone suppression test* is the most reliable screening test. Dexamethasone 0.5 mg 6-hourly is given orally for 48 hours. Normal individuals suppress plasma cortisol to <50 nmol/L 2 hours after the last dose of dexamethasone.
- 24-hour *urinary free cortisol* is raised (normal <700 nmol/24 h) in most cases.
- *Circadian rhythm studies* show loss of the normal circadian fall of plasma cortisol at 2400 h in patients with Cushing's syndrome.

### Establishing the cause of Cushing's syndrome

- Adrenal CT or MRI will detect adrenal adenomas and carcinomas, as those which produce Cushing's syndrome are usually large.
- Pituitary MRI and CT will detect some, but not all, pituitary adenomas.
- *Plasma ACTH levels* are low or undetectable in adrenal gland disease (non-ACTH dependent) and should lead to adrenal imaging. High or inappropriately normal values suggest pituitary disease or ectopic production of ACTH.
- *High-dose dexamethasone suppression test.* Dexamethasone 2 mg 6-hourly is given orally for 48 hours. Most patients with pituitary-dependent Cushing's disease suppress plasma cortisol by 48 hours. Failure of suppression suggests an ectopic source of ACTH or an adrenal tumour.
- *Corticotrophin-releasing hormone test.* An exaggerated plasma ACTH response to exogenous CRH (bolus given intravenously) suggests pituitary-dependent Cushing's disease.
- *Other tests* will depend on the probable cause of Cushing's syndrome, which has been established from the above tests. Chest X-ray, bronchoscopy and CT of the body may localize ectopic ACTH-producing tumours. Selective venous sampling for ACTH will localize pituitary tumours and an otherwise occult ectopic ACTH-producing tumour.
- *Radiolabelled octreotide* (<sup>111</sup>In octreotide) is occasionally helpful in locating ectopic ACTH sites.

## Management

Surgical removal is indicated for most pituitary (usually a trans-sphenoidal approach) and adrenal tumours and may be appropriate for many cases of ectopic ACTH-producing tumours.

Drugs which inhibit cortisol synthesis (metyrapone, ketoconazole or aminoglutethimide) may be useful in cases not amenable to surgery.

External-beam irradiation of the pituitary produces a very slow response and is restricted to cases where surgery is unsuccessful, contraindicated or unacceptable to the patient.

Iatrogenic Cushing's syndrome responds to a reduction in steroid dosage when possible. Immunosuppressant drugs such as azathioprine are used in conjunction with steroids to enable lower steroid doses to be used to control the underlying disease.

## Incidental adrenal tumours

With the advent of improved abdominal imaging, unsuspected adrenal masses have been discovered in about 4% of scans. Most are small non-secreting adenomas. Others are secreting adenomas, carcinomas or metastases. Metastases will usually be apparent from the previous or ongoing medical history and specific imaging phenotype. If the imaging suggests an adenoma, functional tests to exclude secretory activity are indicated: dexamethasone suppression test for subclinical Cushing's syndrome; 24-hour urinary specimen for measurement of catecholamines to exclude a pheochromocytoma; and plasma renin and aldosterone if hypertensive. Most authorities recommend surgical removal of large (>4–5 cm) and functional tumours but observation of smaller hormonally inactive lesions.

## THE THIRST AXIS

Antidiuretic hormone (ADH, also called vasopressin) is synthesized in the hypothalamus and then migrates in neurosecretory granules along axonal pathways to the posterior pituitary gland. Secretion of ADH is determined principally by the plasma osmolality. The major hormonal action of ADH is on the collecting tubule of the kidney to cause water reabsorption. At high concentrations vasopressin also causes vasoconstriction. ADH secretion is suppressed at plasma osmolality below 280 mOsm/kg, thus allowing maximal water diuresis. Secretion increases to a maximum at a plasma osmolality of 295 mOsm/kg. Large falls in blood pressure or volume also stimulate vasopressin secretion.

## Diabetes insipidus

Impaired vasopressin secretion (cranial diabetes insipidus (CDI)) or renal resistance to its action (nephrogenic diabetes insipidus (NDI)) leads to polyuria (dilute urine in excess of 3 L/24 h), nocturia and compensatory polydipsia. It must be distinguished from primary polydipsia, which is a psychiatric disturbance characterized by excessive intake of water, and other causes of polyuria and polydipsia, e.g. hyperglycaemia.

### Aetiology

CDI is caused by disease of the hypothalamus: neurosurgery, trauma, primary or secondary tumours, infiltrative disease (sarcoidosis, histiocytosis) and idiopathic. Damage to the hypothalamo-neurohypophysial tract or the

posterior pituitary with an intact hypothalamus does not lead to ADH deficiency as the hormone can still 'leak' from the damaged end of the intact neurone. Causes of NDI are listed in Table 14.12.

## Clinical features

There is polyuria (as much as 15 L in 24 h) and polydipsia. Patients depend on a normal thirst mechanism and access to water to maintain normonatraemia.

## Investigations

- Urine volume must be measured to confirm polyuria.
- Plasma biochemistry shows high or high-normal sodium concentration and osmolality. Blood glucose, serum potassium and calcium should be measured to exclude common causes of polyuria.
- Urine osmolality is inappropriately low for the high plasma osmolality.
- A water deprivation test is indicated for polyuric patients with normal blood glucose and serum electrolytes to determine if they have DI. Serum and urine osmolality, urine volume and body weight are measured hourly for up to 8 hours during fasting and without fluids. The test is abandoned if the bodyweight drops by > 3%, as this indicates significant dehydration. Serum osmolality remaining within the normal range (275–295 mOsm/kg) and concentrated urine (>600 mOsmol/kg) is a normal response. Serum osmolality >300 mOsm/kg without adequate concentration of the urine (<600 mOsm/kg) indicates DI at which point desmopressin is given and urine osmolality is measured for a further 2–4 hours while allowing free fluids. NDI is diagnosed if urine osmolality stays the same and CDI diagnosed if urine osmolality increases by >50%.
- MRI of the hypothalamus is performed in cases of CDI.

## Management

Treatment of the underlying condition seldom improves established CDI. Desmopressin, administered orally, nasally or intramuscularly, is the

**Table 14.12** Causes of nephrogenic diabetes insipidus

|  |
|--|
| Hypokalaemia   |
| Hypercalcaemia   |
| Drugs: lithium chloride, dimeclocycline, glibenclamide |
| Renal tubular acidosis                                 |
| Sickle cell disease                                    |
| Prolonged polyuria of any cause                        |
| Familial (mutation in ADH receptor)                    |

treatment of choice. In mild cases (3–4 L urine per day) thiazide diuretics, carbamazepine and chlorpropamide are used to sensitize the renal tubules to endogenous vasopressin. Treatment of the cause will usually improve NDI.

## Syndrome of inappropriate ADH secretion (SIADH)

There is continued ADH secretion in spite of plasma hypotonicity and a normal or expanded plasma volume.

### Aetiology

SIADH is caused by disordered hypothalamic–pituitary secretion or ectopic production of ADH, e.g. small-cell lung cancer (Table 14.13).

### Clinical features

There is nausea, irritability and headache with mild dilutional hyponatraemia (serum sodium 115–125 mmol/L). Fits and coma may occur with severe hyponatraemia (<115 mmol/L).

### Investigations

SIADH must be differentiated from other causes of dilutional hyponatraemia (p. 333). Criteria for diagnosis are:

- Low serum sodium
- Low plasma osmolality with ‘inappropriate’ urine osmolality >100 mOsmol/kg (and typically higher than plasma osmolality)
- Continued urinary sodium excretion (>30 mmol/L)
- Absence of hypokalaemia, hypotension and hypovolaemia
- Normal renal, adrenal and thyroid function.

Hyponatraemia is common during illness in frail elderly patients and it may sometimes be difficult to distinguish SIADH from salt and water depletion. Under these circumstances a trial of 1–2 L 0.9% saline is given. Sodium depletion will respond while SIADH will not.

**Table 14.13** Causes of syndrome of inappropriate ADH

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Cancer</b>    | Many tumours, of which the most common is small-cell cancer of the lung |
| <b>Brain</b>     | Meningitis, cerebral abscess, head injury, tumour                       |
| <b>Lung</b>      | Pneumonia, tuberculosis, lung abscess                                   |
| <b>Metabolic</b> | Porphyria, alcohol withdrawal   |
| <b>Drugs</b>     | Opiates, chlorpropamide, carbamazepine, vincristine                     |

## Management

Mild asymptomatic cases need no treatment other than that of the underlying cause. For symptomatic cases the options are:

- Water restriction: 500–1000 mL in 24 hours.
- Demeclocycline 600–1200 mg daily, inhibits the action of vasopressin on the kidney (i.e. causes nephrogenic DI) and may be useful if water restriction is poorly tolerated or ineffective.
- The specific vasopressin antagonist, tolvaptan, is used for treatment of hyponatraemia secondary to SIADH. It is expensive and not yet widely used.
- Hypertonic saline, with furosemide to prevent circulatory overload, is necessary in severe cases (Emergency Box 8.1, p. 336).

## DISORDERS OF CALCIUM METABOLISM

The concentration of calcium in the serum is regulated by the action of parathyroid hormone (PTH) and vitamin D on the kidneys, bones and gastrointestinal tract. PTH increases serum calcium concentration by stimulation of calcium reabsorption and activation of vitamin D in the kidney, and increasing calcium release from bone. The most active form of vitamin D (1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D) increases intestinal calcium absorption. Total plasma calcium is normally 2.2–2.6 mmol/L. Usually only 40% of total plasma calcium is ionized and physiologically relevant; the remainder is bound to albumin and thus unavailable to the tissues. Routine analytical methods measure total plasma calcium and this must be corrected for the serum albumin concentration: add or subtract 0.02 mmol/L for every 1 g/L by which the simultaneous albumin lies below or above 40 g/L. For critical measurements, samples should be taken in the fasting state without the use of an occluding cuff, which may increase the local plasma protein concentration.

## Hypercalcaemia

Mild asymptomatic hypercalcaemia occurs in about 1 in 1000 of the population, especially elderly women, and is usually the result of primary hyperparathyroidism.

## Aetiology

Primary hyperparathyroidism and malignancy account for >90% of cases (Table 14.14). Tumour-related hypercalcaemia is caused by the secretion of a peptide with PTH-like activity, or by direct invasion of bone and production of local factors that mobilize calcium. Ectopic PTH secretion by tumours is

**Table 14.14** Causes of hypercalcaemia

|  |
|--|
| <b>Excess PTH</b>  |
| Primary hyperparathyroidism (commonest cause)<br>Tertiary hyperparathyroidism<br>Ectopic PTH (very rare)                                 |
| <b>Malignant disease</b>   |
| Multiple myeloma<br>Secondary deposits in bone<br>Production of osteoclastic factors by tumours<br>PTH-related protein secretion         |
| <b>Excess action of vitamin D</b>  |
| Self-administered vitamin D<br>Granulomatous disease, e.g. sarcoidosis, TB<br>Lymphoma   |
| <b>Other endocrine disease (mild hypercalcaemia only)</b>  |
| Thyrotoxicosis<br>Addison's disease  |
| <b>Drugs</b>   |
| Thiazides – reduced renal tubular excretion of $\text{Ca}^{2+}$<br>Vitamin D analogues<br>Lithium – increased PTH secretion<br>Vitamin A |
| <b>Miscellaneous</b>   |
| Long-term immobility<br>Familial hypocalcaemic hypercalcaemia (rare)   |

very rare. Severe hypercalcaemia ( $>3.5$  mmol/L) is usually caused by malignancy.

Hyperparathyroidism may be primary, secondary or tertiary.

**Primary hyperparathyroidism** affects about 0.1% of the population and is usually caused by a single parathyroid gland adenoma, occasionally hyperplasia, and rarely carcinoma. It may be associated with a hereditary syndrome e.g. MEN (p. 658).

**Secondary hyperparathyroidism** is physiological compensatory hypertrophy of all the glands in response to prolonged hypocalcaemia (e.g. in chronic kidney disease or vitamin D deficiency). Calcium is low or low-normal.

**Tertiary hyperparathyroidism** is the development of apparently autonomous parathyroid hyperplasia after longstanding secondary hyperparathyroidism, most often in renal disease. Plasma calcium and PTH are both raised. Treatment is parathyroidectomy.

## Clinical features

Mild hypercalcaemia (corrected serum calcium  $<3$  mmol/L) is often asymptomatic and discovered on biochemical screening. More severe hypercalcaemia produces symptoms of general malaise and depression, bone pain, abdominal pain, nausea and constipation. Calcium deposition in the renal tubules causes polyuria and nocturia. Renal calculi and chronic kidney disease may develop. With very high levels ( $>3.8$  mmol/L) there is dehydration, confusion, clouding of consciousness and a risk of cardiac arrest. Hypercalcaemia is rarely the presenting feature of malignancy which is usually clinically apparent when the hypercalcaemia is first noted. Thus, hypercalcaemia in an otherwise well outpatient is most likely to be due to primary hyperparathyroidism.

## Investigations

- Several fasting serum calcium and phosphate samples are performed to confirm mild hypercalcaemia. The serum phosphate is low in primary hyperparathyroidism and some cases of malignancy. It is normal or high in other causes of hypercalcaemia.
- Serum PTH. Normal or elevated levels during hypercalcaemia are inappropriate and imply hyperparathyroidism. When this combination is present in an asymptomatic patient then further investigation is usually unnecessary.
- 24-hour urinary calcium is measured in young patients and those with a family history of hypercalcaemia to exclude familial hypocalciuric hypercalcaemia in which PTH levels are also raised. Urinary calcium excretion is markedly low but normal or raised in primary hyperparathyroidism.
- A low concentration of PTH excludes primary hyperparathyroidism and other causes need to be investigated. The following tests may help in the diagnosis:
  - Protein electrophoresis for myeloma
  - TSH to exclude hyperthyroidism
  - Tetracosactide test to exclude Addison's disease
  - Hydrocortisone suppression test: hydrocortisone 40 mg orally three times daily for 10 days leads to suppression of plasma calcium in sarcoidosis, vitamin D-mediated hypercalcaemia and some malignancies.

## Management

This involves lowering of the calcium levels to near normal and treatment of the underlying cause. Severe hypercalcaemia ( $>3.5$  mmol/L) is a medical emergency which must be treated aggressively whatever the underlying cause (Emergency Box 14.3).





## Emergency Box 14.3

### Management of acute severe hypercalcaemia

- Rehydrate with intravenous fluid (0.9% saline)

4–6 L of intravenous saline over 24 h, then

3–4 L for several days thereafter

Amount and rate depend on clinical assessment and measurement of serum urea and electrolytes

- Bisphosphonate – only after rehydration, usually a minimum of 2 L

Pamidronate disodium 60–90 mg as an intravenous infusion in 0.5 L 0.9% saline over 2–8 h

- Measure

Serum urea and electrolytes at least daily

Measure serum calcium at least 48 h after initiation of treatment, normalization may take 3–5 days, mean duration of action 28 days

- Prednisolone (30–60 mg daily)

May be useful in some cases (myeloma, sarcoidosis and vitamin D excess) but in most cases ineffective

- Prevent recurrence

Treat underlying cause if possible

With untreatable malignancy consider maintenance treatment with bisphosphonates

## Treatment of primary hyperparathyroidism

The treatment of a symptomatic parathyroid adenoma is surgical removal. Conservative therapy may be indicated in asymptomatic patients older than 50 years with mildly raised serum calcium levels (2.65–3 mmol/L). In those with parathyroid hyperplasia all four glands are removed.

## Hypocalcaemia and hypoparathyroidism

### Aetiology

Causes of hypocalcaemia are listed in Table 14.15. Chronic kidney disease is the most common cause and results from inadequate production of active vitamin D and renal phosphate retention, leading to microprecipitation of calcium phosphate in the tissues. Mild transient hypocalcaemia often occurs after parathyroidectomy, and a few patients develop longstanding hypoparathyroidism.

### Clinical features

Hypocalcaemia causes increased excitability of muscles and nerves. There is numbness around the mouth and in the extremities, followed by cramps,

**Table 14.15** Causes of hypocalcaemia

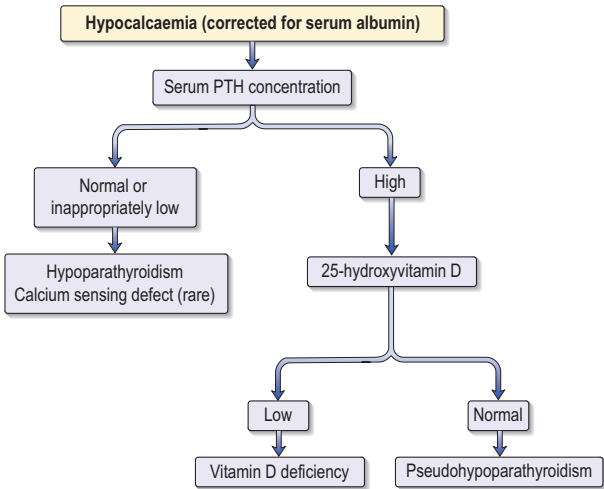
|   |
|---|
| <b>Increased serum phosphate levels</b>                                 |
| Chronic kidney disease*   |
| Phosphate therapy   |
| <b>Reduced PTH function</b>   |
| Post-thyroidectomy and parathyroidectomy (usually transient)*           |
| Congenital deficiency (DiGeorge syndrome)                               |
| Idiopathic hypoparathyroidism (autoimmune)                              |
| Severe hypomagnesaemia (inhibits PTH release)                           |
| Pseudohypoparathyroidism (end-organ resistance to PTH)                  |
| <b>Vitamin D deficiency</b>   |
| Reduced exposure to ultraviolet light                                   |
| Malabsorption   |
| Antiepileptic drugs (induce enzymes that increase vitamin D metabolism) |
| Vitamin D resistance (rare)   |
| <b>Drugs</b>  |
| Calcitonin  |
| Bisphosphonates   |
| <b>Miscellaneous</b>  |
| Acute pancreatitis*   |
| Citrated blood in massive transfusion                                   |
| <i>*Indicates common cause of hypocalcaemia</i>                         |

tetany (carpopedal spasm: opposition of the thumb, extension of the interphalangeal and flexion of the metacarpophalangeal joints), convulsions and death if untreated. Chvostek's (tapping over the facial nerve in the region of the parotid gland causes twitching of the ipsilateral facial muscles) and Trousseau's sign (carpopedal spasm induced by inflation of the sphygmomanometer cuff to a level above systolic blood pressure) test for neuromuscular excitability. Severe hypocalcaemia may cause papilloedema and a prolonged QT interval on the ECG.

Other causes of tetany are alkalosis, potassium and magnesium deficiency and hyperventilation which decreases ionized fraction of calcium (total plasma calcium is normal) by altering the protein binding of calcium such that the ionized fraction is decreased.

## Investigations

The cause of hypocalcaemia is often apparent from the history and physical examination together with measurement of serum creatinine and eGFR (to look for chronic kidney disease) and magnesium. Figure 14.10 shows an algorithm for subsequent investigation.



**Fig 14.10** Algorithm for the investigation of hypocalcaemia.

## Management

**Acute** (e.g. with tetany): 10 mL of 10% calcium gluconate (2.25 mmol) diluted in 50–100 mL 5% glucose and administered intravenously over 10 minutes with ECG monitoring. Treatment can be repeated until symptoms have resolved and continued as an infusion over 4 hours.

**Persistent hypocalcaemia** In vitamin D deficiency, treatment is with either ergocalciferol (vitamin D<sub>2</sub>) or cholecalciferol (vitamin D<sub>3</sub>) 50 000 IU orally once a week for 8 weeks. This treatment is ineffective in patients with hypoparathyroidism because PTH is needed for conversion to 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D. Treatment is with alfacalcidol (1 $\alpha$ -hydroxycholecalciferol) 0.25–2  $\mu$ g daily to maintain serum calcium within the lower part of the normal range. Calcium levels should be checked initially weekly and 3–6 monthly once a stable dose is reached.

## DISORDERS OF PHOSPHATE CONCENTRATION

Phosphate is essential for most biochemical processes in the body. The majority of body phosphate is contained within bone and regulation of plasma concentration is closely linked with calcium. Plasma phosphate concentrations are controlled in part by parathyroid hormone (PTH) and 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D<sub>3</sub> which alter phosphate reabsorption in the proximal renal tubule. Hyperphosphataemia most commonly occurs in chronic kidney disease and treatment is with gut phosphate binders and dialysis.

## Hypophosphataemia

This is common and often unrecognized.

### Aetiology

Hypophosphataemia is due to three major mechanisms: redistribution into cells, increased renal excretion, decreased intake or intestinal absorption of phosphate (Table 14.16). The commonest causes are treatment of patients with diabetic ketoacidosis, and carbohydrate refeeding in patients with alcohol misuse or recent weight loss and hyperparathyroidism.

### Clinical features

These are due to intracellular phosphate depletion which can impact on all organ systems. Clinical features include muscle weakness (diaphragmatic weakness leading to respiratory failure, impaired myocardial contractility and cardiac failure, and skeletal muscle weakness and rhabdomyolysis), encephalopathy (confusion, hallucinations and convulsions) and rarely haemolysis. More prolonged hypophosphataemia leads to osteomalacia.

### Treatment

**Oral phosphate supplements** (e.g. effervescent tablets 4–6 tablets daily if each tablet contains 16.1 mmol phosphate) and treatment of the underlying cause is generally sufficient. Tablets also contain sodium and potassium and the additional load needs to be taken into account in daily intake. Vitamin D supplementation is indicated in patients with vitamin D deficiency (p. 653).

**Table 14.16** Causes of hypophosphataemia

#### Redistribution of phosphate from extracellular fluid into cell

Treatment of diabetic ketoacidosis  
Refeeding syndrome  
Acute respiratory alkalosis  
Hungry bone syndrome after parathyroidectomy

#### Decreased intestinal absorption

Poor oral intake (rare)  
Some antacids  
Diarrhoea

#### Increased urine excretion

Hyperparathyroidism  
Vitamin D deficiency  
Primary renal abnormality

**Intravenous phosphate** is potentially dangerous and may precipitate with calcium causing hypocalcaemia and ectopic calcification in kidneys and heart. It is indicated for severe symptomatic hypophosphataemia (serum phosphate <0.4 mmol/L) and given as 9–18 mmol phosphate diluted in 250–500 mL glucose 5% over 6–12 hours via peripheral line. Plasma concentrations of calcium, phosphate, magnesium and potassium should be monitored during treatment.

## ENDOCRINOLOGY OF BLOOD PRESSURE CONTROL

Blood pressure is determined by cardiac output and peripheral resistance, and an increase in blood pressure may be due to an increase in one or both of these. In a few patients an underlying cause can be identified for hypertension including endocrine causes (Table 14.17). However, in 90% of cases no cause can be found and patients are said to have essential hypertension. Young patients (<35 years), those with an abnormal baseline screening test (p. 482) or patients with malignant hypertension or hypertension resistant to conventional treatment (e.g. more than three drugs) should be screened for secondary causes.

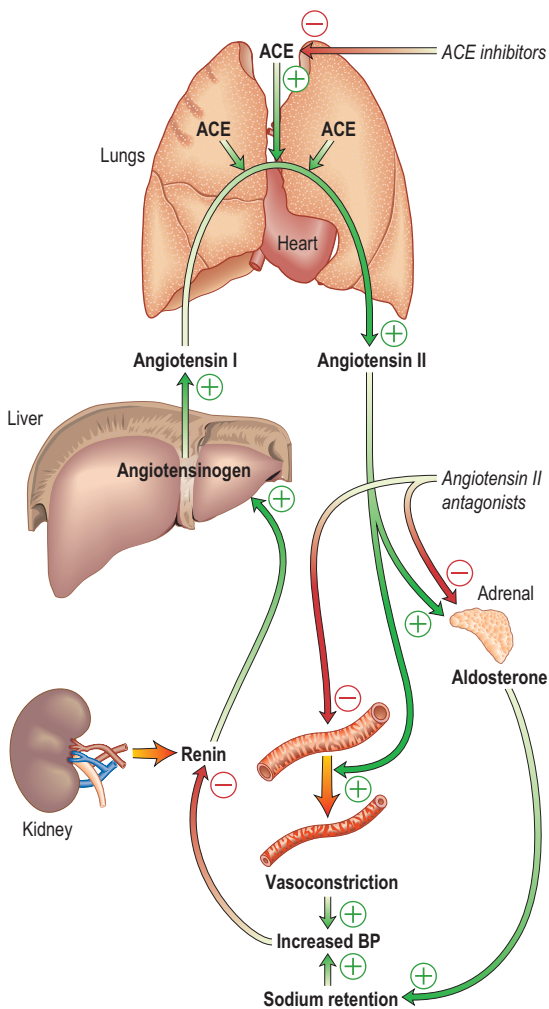
### The renin–angiotensin system

The renin–angiotensin–aldosterone system is illustrated in Figure 14.11. *Angiotensin*, an  $\alpha_2$ -globulin of hepatic origin, circulates in plasma. The enzyme *renin* is secreted by the kidney in response to decreased renal perfusion pressure or flow; it cleaves the decapeptide *angiotensin I* from angiotensinogen. Angiotensin I is inactive but is further cleaved by converting enzyme (present in lung and vascular endothelium) into the active peptide, *angiotensin II*, which has two major actions:

- It causes powerful vasoconstriction (within seconds)
- It stimulates the adrenal zona glomerulosa to increase aldosterone production.

**Table 14.17** Endocrine causes of hypertension

| Excessive production of                     |   |
|---|---|
| Renin                                       | Renal artery stenosis, renin-secreting tumours            |
| Aldosterone                                 | Adrenal adenoma, adrenal hyperplasia                      |
| Mineralocorticoids                          | Cushing's syndrome (cortisol is a weak mineralocorticoid) |
| Catecholamines                              | Phaeochromocytoma   |
| Growth hormone                              | Acromegaly  |
| Oral contraceptive pill (mechanism unclear) |   |



**Fig. 14.11** The renin–angiotensin–aldosterone system. ACE, angiotensin-converting enzyme. Angiotensin II antagonists act on the adrenals and blood vessels.

**Aldosterone** causes sodium retention and urinary potassium loss (hours to days). This combination of changes leads to an increase in blood pressure, and the stimulus to renin production is reduced. Sodium deprivation or urinary loss also increases renin production, whereas dietary sodium excess will suppress production.

## Primary hyperaldosteronism

This is a rare condition (<1% of all hypertension) where high aldosterone levels exist independently of the renin–angiotensin system. It is caused by an adrenal adenoma secreting aldosterone (Conn's syndrome) or by bilateral adrenal hyperplasia.

### Clinical features

The major function of aldosterone is to cause an exchange transport of sodium and potassium in the distal renal tubule; that is, absorption of sodium (and hence water) and excretion of potassium. Hyperaldosteronism causes hypertension, resulting from expansion of intravascular volume, and hypokalaemia.

### Investigations

- Hypokalaemia is often but not always present.
- Plasma aldosterone : renin ratio (ARR) is the initial screening test for primary hyperaldosteronism. Spironolactone and eplerenone should be stopped 6 weeks before the test. A raised ratio does not confirm the diagnosis and further tests are then indicated to demonstrate inappropriate aldosterone secretion.
- The diagnosis is made by demonstrating increased plasma aldosterone levels that are not suppressed with 0.9% saline infusion (2 L over 4 h) or fludrocortisone administration (a mineralocorticoid).
- CT or MRI of the adrenals is used to differentiate adenomas from hyperplasia.

### Management

An adenoma is removed surgically. Hypertension resulting from hyperplasia is treated with the aldosterone antagonist spironolactone or eplerenone (p. 350).

## Phaeochromocytoma

This is a rare (0.1% of hypertension) catecholamine-producing tumour of the sympathetic nervous system; 10% are malignant and 10% occur outside the adrenal gland. Some are associated with multiple endocrine neoplasia (see below).

## Clinical features

Symptoms may be episodic and include headache, palpitations, sweating, anxiety, nausea and weight loss. The signs, which may also be intermittent, include hypertension, tachycardia and pallor. There may be hyperglycaemia.

## Investigations

- A 24-hour urine collection for urinary catecholamines and metabolites (metanephrines) is a useful screening test; normal levels on three separate collections virtually exclude the diagnosis.
- Raised levels of plasma catecholamines confirm the diagnosis.
- Plasma chromogranin A (a storage vesicle protein) is raised.
- CT/MRI is useful to localize the tumour.
- Scintigraphy using meta- $^{131}\text{I}$ iodobenzylguanidine (mIBG), which is selectively taken up by adrenergic cells, is useful with extra-adrenal tumours.

## Management

The treatment of choice is surgical excision of the tumour under  $\alpha$ - and  $\beta$ -blockade using phenoxybenzamine and propranolol, which is started before the operation. These drugs can also be used long term where operation is not possible.

## Multiple endocrine neoplasia

The multiple endocrine neoplasia syndromes (MEN) are rare, but recognition is important for both treatment and evaluation of family members – inheritance is autosomal dominant. MEN is the name given to the synchronous or metachronous (i.e. occurring at different times) occurrence of tumours involving a number of endocrine glands (Table 14.18). MEN type 1 is due to a mutation in the *menin* gene on chromosome 11; the normal protein product of this gene acts as a tumour suppressor. The genetic abnormality in MEN 2 lies within the *Ret* proto-oncogene on chromosome 10; the gene product plays a role in central and peripheral nerve development and function. Management involves surgical excision of the tumours if possible. Asymptomatic family members should be screened by measurement of serum calcium in MEN 1 (due to the high penetrance of hyperparathyroidism) and by genetic testing for *Ret* mutations in MEN 2 families. In a patient known to have MEN, constant surveillance is required for additional features of the syndrome, which may develop many years after the initial presentation.



**Table 14.18** Multiple endocrine neoplasia (MEN) syndrome

| Organ   | Frequency | Tumours/clinical manifestations                   |
|---|-----------|---|
| <b>Type 1</b>   |           |   |
| Functioning adenomas in:  |           |   |
| Parathyroid   | 95%       | Hypercalcaemia                                    |
| Pituitary   | 30%       | Prolactinoma, acromegaly, Cushing's disease       |
| Enteropancreatic tumours  | 60%       | Gastrinoma, insulinoma, glucagonoma, VIPoma       |
| Other:  |           |   |
| Foregut carcinoids  | 10%       | Thymic, bronchial gastric                         |
| Adrenal cortex adenomas   | 25%       | Non-functional tumours                            |
| Cutaneous tumours   | 60%       | Angiofibromas, collagenomas, lipomas              |
| <b>Type 2A</b>  |           |   |
| Medullary thyroid carcinoma   | 95%       | Thyroid mass, diarrhoea, raised plasma calcitonin |
| Adrenal medulla   | 40%       | Phaeochromocytoma                                 |
| Parathyroid hyperplasia   | 10%       | Hypercalcaemia                                    |
| <b>Type 2B</b>  |           |   |
| Like type 2A (but not parathyroid disease) with a typical phenotypic appearance: slim body habitus and neuromas of lips, tongue, and gastrointestinal tract |           |   |
| <i>VIP, vasoactive intestinal polypeptide</i>   |           |   |

## DISORDERS OF TEMPERATURE REGULATION

Normal body temperature is 36.5–37.5°C and is controlled by temperature-sensitive cells within the hypothalamus which control heat generation and loss. Fever during an infection is due to cytokines, particularly interleukin-1, released from inflammatory cells acting in the hypothalamus affecting the thermoregulatory set-point.

### Hypothermia

Hypothermia is defined as a drop in core (i.e. rectal) temperature to below 35°C. It is frequently fatal when the temperature falls below 28°C.

## Aetiology

Very young and elderly individuals are particularly prone to hypothermia, the latter having a reduced ability to feel the cold. Hypothyroidism, hypnotics, alcohol or intercurrent illness may contribute. In healthy individuals, prolonged exposure to extremes of temperature or prolonged immersion in cold water is the most common underlying cause.

## Clinical features

Mild hypothermia (32–35°C) causes shivering and a feeling of intense cold. More severe hypothermia leads progressively to altered consciousness and coma. This is usually associated with a fall in pulse rate and blood pressure, muscle stiffness and depressed reflexes. As coma ensues, the pupillary and other brainstem reflexes are lost. Ventricular arrhythmias or asystole is the usual cause of death.

## Diagnosis

Measurement of core temperature with a low-reading thermometer makes the diagnosis. Alteration in consciousness usually indicates a core temperature of below 32°C; this is a medical emergency. With severe hypothermia there are ECG changes, including an increase in the PR interval, widening of the QRS complex and 'J' waves (prominent convex deflections at the junction of the QRS complex and ST segment, best seen in the precordial leads).

## Management

The principles of treatment are to rewarm the patient gradually while correcting metabolic abnormalities (if severe) and treating cardiac arrhythmias (Emergency Box 14.4). Hypothyroidism occurs and if suspected should be treated with i.v. triiodothyronine.

Clues to the presence of hypothyroidism include previous radioiodine treatment or surgery for thyrotoxicosis, and preceding symptoms of hypothyroidism (p. 620). Hypothermia may protect organs from ischaemia in patients with prolonged hypothermia-induced cardiopulmonary arrest. Therefore, resuscitation should be continued (maybe for some hours) until arrest persists after rewarming or until attempts to raise the core temperature have failed. Drugs used in the usual arrest situation, e.g. adrenaline (epinephrine), have reduced efficacy at low temperatures and are withheld until the temperature is greater than 30°C.



## Emergency Box 14.4

### Management of hypothermia

#### Investigations

- Arterial blood gases
- Full blood count, urea and electrolytes, blood glucose, thyroid function tests, blood cultures
- Chest X-ray, ECG

#### Management

- Give oxygen by face mask and attach an ECG monitor
- Search for and treat infection, pneumonia is common
- Intubate and ventilate patients who are comatose or in respiratory failure
- Warmed (37°C) intravenous fluids to achieve urine output 30–40 mL/h
- Passive external warming if core temperature >32°C
  - Place patient in a warm room (27–29°C)
  - ‘Space’ blankets
  - Warm bath water
- Active external rewarming if core temperature 28–32°C
  - Warm blankets, heating pads or forced warm air
  - Rewarm trunk *before* extremities to minimize peripheral vasodilatation
  - Warm bath water
- Active internal rewarming if core temperature <28°C
  - Humidified and warmed (40–46°C) oxygen
  - Lavage (gastric, peritoneal, bladder) with warm fluids (40°C)
  - Extracorporeal shunt (haemodialysis, arteriovenous or venovenous) rewarming
  - Cardiopulmonary bypass – treatment of choice for arrested hypothermic patients
- Monitor core temperature, oxygen saturation by pulse oximetry, urine output and central venous pressure

### Hyperthermia (hyperpyrexia)

Hyperpyrexia is a body temperature above 41°C. Causes include:

- Injury to the hypothalamus (trauma, surgery, infection)
- Malignant hyperpyrexia – rare autosomal dominant condition in which skeletal muscle generates heat in the presence of certain anaesthetic drugs, e.g. suxamethonium

- Ingestion of 3,4-methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (ecstasy)
- Neuroleptic malignant syndrome: idiosyncratic reaction to therapeutic dose of neuroleptic medication, e.g. phenothiazines.

Treatment includes stopping the offending drug, cooling and the administration of dantrolene sodium.

## THERAPEUTICS

### Thyroid hormones

#### Mechanism of action

Synthetic thyroxine.

#### Indications

Hypothyroidism, diffuse non-toxic goitre, thyroid carcinoma.

#### Preparations and dose

##### Levothyroxine sodium (thyroxine)

Tablets: 25  $\mu\text{g}$ , 50  $\mu\text{g}$ , 100  $\mu\text{g}$ .

1.6  $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}/\text{day}$  body weight (100–125  $\mu\text{g}$  for an average sized adult); 25  $\mu\text{g}/\text{day}$  in elderly or those with ischaemic heart disease increased in steps of 25–50  $\mu\text{g}$  every 3–6 weeks until the serum TSH values return to the reference range.

#### Side-effects

These usually occur at excessive dosage and at start of therapy with rapid increase in metabolism. Arrhythmias, palpitations, skeletal muscle cramps and weakness, vomiting, diarrhoea, tremors, restlessness, headache, flushing, sweating, fever, excessive loss of weight and, sometimes, angular pain where there is latent myocardial ischaemia.

#### Cautions/contraindications

Panhypopituitarism or predisposition to adrenal insufficiency from other causes (initiate corticosteroid therapy before starting levothyroxine), lower starting dose in the elderly or cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus (dosage increase may be needed for antidiabetic drugs including insulin). Contraindicated in thyrotoxicosis unless with carbimazole (see below).

### Antithyroid drugs

#### Mechanism of action

Interfere with synthesis of thyroid hormones.

## Indications

Long-term management of thyrotoxicosis and to prepare patients for thyroidectomy. May be given with propranolol, 40 mg three times daily, for initial symptom control.

## Preparations and dose

### Carbimazole

Tablets: 5 mg, 20 mg.

Most commonly used drug for thyrotoxicosis in the UK. Initial treatment 15–40 mg daily; higher doses required in severe disease. This dose is continued until the patient becomes euthyroid, usually after 4–8 weeks, and the dose is then gradually reduced over 6–24 months to a maintenance dose of 5–15 mg daily. A combination of carbimazole, 40–60 mg daily with levothyroxine 50–150 µg daily is sometimes used in a *blocking–replacement regimen* (not in pregnancy).

### Propylthiouracil

Tablets: 50 mg.

Dosing schedule is as for carbimazole but initial treatment is 200–400 mg daily and maintenance dose 50–150 mg daily.

## Side-effects

Bone marrow suppression particularly with carbimazole; patients should be asked to report symptoms and signs suggestive of infection, especially sore throat. A white cell count should be performed if there is any clinical evidence of infection, and treatment should be stopped immediately if there is clinical or laboratory evidence of neutropenia. Nausea, gastrointestinal disturbance, headache, rashes and pruritus occur with carbimazole; cutaneous vasculitis, hepatic necrosis, nephritis and lupus-like syndrome with propylthiouracil.

## Cautions/contraindications

Liver disorders; overtreatment can result in rapid development of hypothyroidism.

## Corticosteroids

### Mechanism of action

**Replacement therapy** The adrenal cortex normally secretes hydrocortisone (cortisol) which has glucocorticoid activity and weak mineralocorticoid activity. It also secretes the mineralocorticoid aldosterone. In *primary adrenal insufficiency* physiological replacement is best achieved with a combination of hydrocortisone and the mineralocorticoid fludrocortisone; hydrocortisone

alone does not usually provide sufficient mineralocorticoid activity for complete replacement. In *hypopituitarism* glucocorticoids are given but aldosterone is not necessary as production is regulated by the renin–angiotensin system.

**Anti-inflammatory actions** include induction of the synthesis of I $\kappa$ B, an inhibitory protein which binds NF-Kappa B.

## Indications

- A wide variety of inflammatory conditions of the joints, lungs, skin and bowel, acute transplant rejection, autoimmune conditions, nephritic/nephrotic syndrome (particularly in children), cerebral oedema, acute hypersensitivity reactions such as angio-oedema of the upper respiratory tract and anaphylactic shock
- For replacement therapy in adrenal insufficiency and hypopituitarism.

The type of steroid preparation used depends on the indication, e.g. dexamethasone is a very potent steroid with insignificant mineralocorticoid activity (see below) and this makes it particularly suitable for high-dose therapy in conditions where fluid retention (mineralocorticoid side-effect) would be a disadvantage, e.g. cerebral oedema. Prednisolone has predominantly glucocorticoid activity and is the corticosteroid most commonly used by mouth for long-term disease suppression. The relatively high mineralocorticoid activity of cortisone and hydrocortisone, and the resulting fluid retention, make them unsuitable for disease suppression on a long-term basis. Hydrocortisone is used for adrenal replacement therapy and intravenously in the emergency management of some conditions, e.g. severe ulcerative colitis, anaphylactic shock. Corticosteroids are also used by inhalation in asthma, by rectal administration in inflammatory bowel disease, and topically in the treatment of inflammatory conditions of the skin. These preparations are not discussed in this section.

## Preparations and dose

The equivalent anti-inflammatory doses of corticosteroids and their mineralocorticoid activity are shown in Table 14.19.

### Prednisolone

*Tablets: 1 mg, 5 mg, 25 mg; Soluble tablets: 5 mg; Enteric-coated tablets: 2.5 mg, 5 mg.*

**Oral** Usual treatment dose, initially 10–40 mg daily, up to 60 mg in severe disease as a single dose after breakfast. Maintenance usually 2.5–15 mg.

### Hydrocortisone

*Tablets: 10 mg, 20 mg; Injection: 100 mg powder for reconstitution.*

**Oral** Replacement therapy: 20–30 mg daily in divided doses.

**Table 14.19** Equivalent anti-inflammatory doses of corticosteroids

| Mineralocorticoid activity |            |
|----------------------------|------------|
| Prednisolone 5 mg          | Slight     |
| = Betamethasone 750 µg     | Negligible |
| = Cortisone acetate 25 mg  | High       |
| = Deflazacort 6 mg         | Slight     |
| = Dexamethasone 750 µg     | Negligible |
| = Hydrocortisone 20 mg     | High       |
| = Methylprednisolone 4 mg  | Slight     |
| = Triamcinolone 4 mg       | Slight     |

**IV/IM** 100–500 mg, three to four times daily or as required, by a slow bolus or as an infusion in sodium chloride 0.9% or glucose 5%.

### Dexamethasone

*Tablets: 500 µg, 2 mg; Oral solution: 2 mg/5 mL; Injection: 4 mg/mL, 24 mg/5 mL.*

**Oral** 0.5–10 mg daily in divided doses.

**IV/IM** Initially 0.5–20 mg daily in divided doses; intravenous injection must be given over at least 3–5 minutes or as an infusion in sodium chloride 0.9% or glucose 5%.

### Methylprednisolone

*Tablets: 2 mg, 4 mg, 16 mg, 100 mg; Injection: 40 mg, 125 mg, 500 mg, 1 g, 2 g vial.*

**Oral** Usual range 2–40 mg daily.

**IV/IM** Initially 10–500 mg daily, dose depends on condition. Slow intravenous injection or infusion.

### Side-effects

*Glucocorticoid* side-effects include diabetes and osteoporosis (p. 639). Precautions for patients taking prolonged therapy with corticosteroids are discussed on page 640. *Mineralocorticoid* side-effects include hypertension, sodium and water retention and potassium loss.

### Cautions/contraindications

Untreated systemic infection, avoid live virus vaccines in those receiving immunosuppressive doses.

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# Diabetes mellitus and other disorders of metabolism

## DIABETES MELLITUS

### Glucose metabolism

Blood glucose levels are closely regulated in health and rarely stray outside the range of 3.5–8.0 mmol/L (63–144 mg/dL), despite the varying demands of food, fasting and exercise. The principal organ of glucose homeostasis is the liver, which absorbs and stores glucose (as glycogen) in the post-absorptive state and releases it into the circulation between meals to match the rate of glucose utilization by peripheral tissues. The liver also combines 3-carbon molecules derived from breakdown of fat (glycerol), muscle glycogen (lactate) and protein (e.g. alanine) into the 6-carbon glucose molecule by the process of gluconeogenesis. Insulin is the key hormone involved in the storage of nutrients, in the form of glycogen in liver and muscle, and triglyceride in fat. During a meal insulin (derived from proinsulin after splitting off C-peptide) is released from the beta ( $\beta$ ) cells of the pancreatic islets into the portal vein and facilitates glucose uptake by fat and muscle and suppresses glucose production by the liver. In the fasting state insulin concentrations are low and it modulates glucose production from the liver. The counter-regulatory hormones, glucagon, adrenaline (epinephrine), cortisol and growth hormone, oppose the actions of insulin and cause greater production of glucose from the liver and less utilization of glucose in fat and muscle for a given plasma level of insulin.

### Classification of diabetes

Diabetes mellitus is a common group of metabolic disorders that are characterized by chronic hyperglycaemia resulting from relative insulin deficiency, insulin resistance or both. Diabetes is usually primary but may be secondary to other conditions, which include pancreatic (e.g. total pancreatectomy,

chronic pancreatitis, haemochromatosis) and endocrine diseases (e.g. acromegaly and Cushing's syndrome). It may also be drug induced, most commonly by thiazide diuretics and corticosteroids.

Primary diabetes is divided into type 1 and type 2 diabetes. In practice the two diseases are a spectrum, distinct at the two ends but overlapping in the middle (Table 15.1). At one end of the spectrum the type 1 diabetic is young, has insulin deficiency with no resistance and immunogenic markers. Type 1 diabetes is most prevalent in Northern European countries, particularly Finland, and the incidence is increasing in most populations, particularly in young children. Type 2 diabetes is common in all populations enjoying an affluent lifestyle and is also increasing in frequency, particularly in adolescents.

**Table 15.1** The spectrum of diabetes: a comparison of type 1 and type 2 diabetes mellitus

|                     | Type 1  | Type 2   |
|---------------------|---|--|
| <b>Epidemiology</b> | Younger (usually < 30 years of age)   | Older (usually > 30 years of age)                |
|                     | Usually lean  | Often overweight                                 |
|                     | Increased in those of North European ancestry   | All racial groups, commoner in African/Asian     |
| <b>Heredity</b>     | HLA-DR3 or DR4 in >90%  | No HLA links                                     |
|                     | 30–50% concordance in identical twins   | 50% concordance in identical twins               |
| <b>Pathogenesis</b> | Autoimmune disease<br>Islet cell antibodies<br>Insulinitis<br>Association with other autoimmune diseases<br>Immunosuppression after diagnosis delays<br>$\beta$ -cell destruction | No immune disturbance                            |
| <b>Clinical</b>     | Insulin deficiency  | Partial insulin deficiency<br>Insulin resistance |
|                     | May develop ketoacidosis  | May develop hyperosmolar state                   |
|                     | Always need insulin   | Sometimes need insulin                           |
| <b>Biochemical</b>  | Eventual disappearance of C-peptide   | C-peptide persists                               |

## Aetiology and pathogenesis

**Type 1 diabetes mellitus** results from an autoimmune destruction of the pancreatic  $\beta$  cells. This process occurs in genetically susceptible individuals and is probably triggered by one or more environmental antigens. Autoantibodies directed against insulin and islet cell antigens (e.g. glutamic acid decarboxylase) predate the onset of clinical disease by several years. There is an association with other organ-specific autoimmune diseases, e.g. autoimmune thyroid disease, Addison's disease and pernicious anaemia.

**Type 2 diabetes mellitus** is a polygenic disorder; the genes responsible for the majority of cases have yet to be identified. However, the genetic causes of some of the rare forms of type 2 diabetes have been identified and include mutations of the insulin receptor and structural alterations of the insulin molecule. Environmental factors, notably central obesity, trigger the disease in genetically susceptible individuals. The  $\beta$ -cell mass is reduced to about 50% of normal at the time of diagnosis in type 2 diabetes. Hyperglycaemia is the result of reduced insulin secretion (inappropriately low for the glucose level) and peripheral insulin resistance.

## Clinical features

- *Acute presentation.* Young people present with a 2–6-week history of thirst, polyuria and weight loss. Polyuria is the result of an osmotic diuresis that results when blood glucose levels exceed the renal tubular reabsorptive capacity (the renal threshold). Fluid and electrolyte losses stimulate thirst. Weight loss is caused by fluid depletion and breakdown of fat and muscle secondary to insulin deficiency. Ketoacidosis (see later) is the presenting feature if these early symptoms are not recognized and treated.
- *Subacute presentation.* Older patients may present with the same symptoms, although less marked and extending over several months. They may also complain of lack of energy, visual problems and pruritus vulvae or balanitis due to *Candida* infection.
- *With complications,* e.g. retinopathy noted during a visit to the optician (see later).
- *In asymptomatic individuals* diagnosed at routine medical examinations, e.g. for insurance purposes.

## Investigations

The diagnosis of diabetes mellitus is made by demonstrating:

- Fasting (no calorie intake for at least 8 hours) plasma glucose  $\geq 7.0$  mmol/L (126 mg/dL)
- Random plasma glucose  $\geq 11.1$  mmol/L (200 mg/dL)

**Table 15.2** The oral glucose tolerance test – WHO criteria

|                                  | Fasting glucose | 2 hour after glucose |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Normal                           | <7.0 mmol/L     | <7.8 mmol/L          |
| Diabetes mellitus                | >7.0 mmol/L     | ≥11.1 mmol/L         |
| Impaired glucose tolerance (IGT) | <7.0            | 7.8–11.0 mmol/L      |

*After an overnight fast 75 g of glucose is taken in 300 mL of water. Blood samples are taken before and 2 hours after the glucose has been given. Results are for venous plasma – whole blood values are lower.*

- One abnormal laboratory value is diagnostic in a patient with typical hyperglycaemic symptoms; two values are needed in asymptomatic people.

A glucose tolerance test (GGT, Table 15.2) is hardly ever used for clinical purposes except for screening for gestational diabetes when a random blood glucose is  $\geq 7.0$  mmol/L. It is mainly used for epidemiological studies. Glycosuria does not necessarily indicate diabetes and may be found in normoglycaemic subjects who have a low renal threshold for glucose excretion.

Other routine investigations at diagnosis include screening the urine for microalbuminuria (p. 684), full blood count, serum urea and electrolytes, liver biochemistry, and a fasting blood sample for cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

### Impaired glucose tolerance

This is not a clinical entity but a risk factor for future diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Obesity and lack of regular physical exercise make progression to frank diabetes more likely.

### Management

A multidisciplinary approach involving, among others, the hospital doctor, the general practitioner, nurse specialists, dieticians and chiropodists is necessary in management of this condition. It is essential that the patient understands the risks of diabetes, the potential benefits of good glycaemic control and the importance of maintaining a lean weight, stopping smoking and taking care of the feet. Education at diagnosis is the key to developing patient self-management with ongoing input from the healthcare professionals involved with care.

Management involves:

- Achieving good glycaemic control
- Advice regarding regular physical activity and reduction of bodyweight in the obese, both of which improve glycaemic control in type 2 diabetes

**Table 15.3** Regular checks for patients with diabetes**Checked each visit**

Review of monitoring results and current treatment  
 Talk about targets and change where necessary  
 Talk about any general or specific problems  
 Continued education

**Checked at least once a year**

Biochemical assessment of metabolic control (e.g. glycosylated haemoglobin test)  
 Measure bodyweight  
 Measure blood pressure  
 Measure plasma lipids (except in extreme old age)  
 Measure visual acuity  
 Examine state of retina (ophthalmoscope or retinal photo)  
 Test urine for proteinuria/microalbuminuria  
 Test blood for renal function (creatinine)  
 Check condition of feet, pulses and neurology  
 Review cardiovascular risk factors  
 Review self-monitoring and injection techniques  
 Review eating habits  
 Review and reinforce structured education

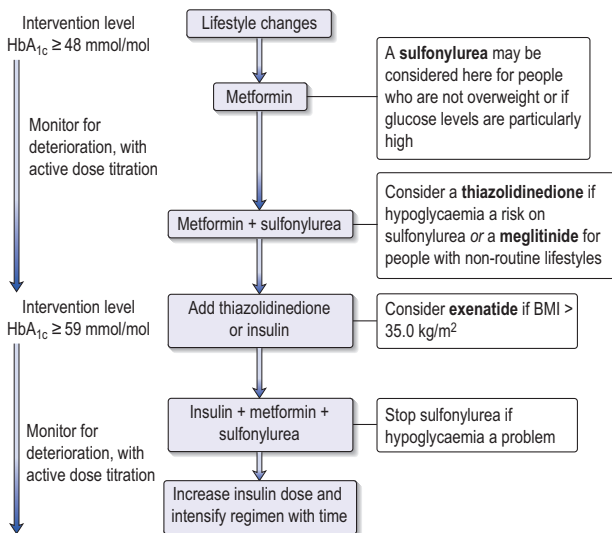
- Aggressive treatment of hypertension and hyperlipidaemia, both of which are additional risk factors for long-term complications of diabetes
- Regular checks of metabolic control and physical examination for evidence of diabetic complications (Table 15.3).

## Principles of treatment

All patients with diabetes require diet therapy. Regular exercise is encouraged to control weight and reduce cardiovascular risk. Insulin is always indicated in a patient who presents in ketoacidosis, and is usually indicated in those under 40 years of age. Insulin is also indicated in other patients who do not achieve satisfactory control with oral hypoglycaemics. Treatment of type 2 diabetes is summarized in Figure 15.1.

**Diet** The diet for people with diabetes is no different from the normal healthy diet recommended for the rest of the population. Recommended food should:

- Be low in sugar (though not sugar-free)
- Be high in starchy carbohydrate (especially foods with a low glycaemic index, e.g. pasta, which is slowly absorbed and prevents rapid fluctuations in blood glucose). Carbohydrate should represent about 40–60% of total energy intake



**Fig. 15.1** Suggested treatment pathway for type 2 diabetes mellitus.

Discussion of lifestyle changes and compliance should be undertaken at every stage. All patients require BP control, statin therapy and low dose aspirin. BMI = body mass index.

- Substitute artificial sweeteners instead of sugar and limit intake of fruit juices, confectionary, cakes and biscuits
- Be low in fat (especially saturated fat) which should represent less than 35% of total energy intake
- Include protein representing about 15% of total energy intake (1 g per kg ideal bodyweight).

The nutrient load should be spread throughout the day (three main meals with snacks in between and at bedtime), which reduces swings in blood glucose. The overweight or obese should be encouraged to lose weight by a combination of changes in food intake and physical activity.

**Tablet treatments for type 2 diabetes** These are used in association with diet and lifestyle changes when this alone has failed to control hyperglycaemia (Fig. 15.1):

- **Biguanide.** Metformin is the only biguanide available (p. 698). It reduces glucose production by the liver and sensitizes target tissues to insulin. It is usually the first line treatment in patients who have not achieved optimal glucose control with diet alone, particularly in overweight patients (unlike the sulphonylureas, appetite is not increased). It is the only oral

agent shown to reduce cardiovascular risk in diabetics. Metformin is also used in combination treatment when single agent use has failed to control diabetes. Side-effects include anorexia and diarrhoea. Lactic acidosis has occurred in patients with severe heart failure, liver disease or renal disease (serum creatinine  $> 150 \mu\text{mol/L}$ ), in whom its use is contraindicated.

- *Sulphonylureas* promote insulin secretion. Glibenclamide is the most popular choice, but is best avoided in elderly people and in those with renal failure because of its relatively long duration of action (12–20 hours) and renal excretion. Tolbutamide, which is shorter acting and metabolized by the liver, is a better choice in these patient groups. The most common side-effect of sulphonylureas is hypoglycaemia, which may be prolonged. Meglitinides, e.g. repaglinide and nateglinide, are also insulin secretagogues. They have a rapid onset of action and short duration of action and are administered shortly before each main meal.
- *Incretins* are agents that mimic the effect of two peptide hormones – glucose-dependent insulinotropic peptide (GIP) and glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) – that are released from the pancreas and promote insulin release after an oral glucose load. In addition to its insulinotropic effect, GLP-1 inhibits glucagon release, prolongs gastric emptying and leads to a decrease in body weight. Exenatide and liraglutide are long-acting GLP-1 analogues given by subcutaneous injection and are used as an alternative to insulin, particularly in the overweight. Sitagliptin and vildagliptin inhibit dipeptidyl peptidase 4, the enzyme which inactivates GLP-1, and thus potentiates the effects of endogenous GLP-1. Their role in the management of type 2 diabetes has yet to be established.
- *Thiazolidinediones* ('glitazones'), e.g. rosiglitazone and pioglitazone, bind to and activate peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor-gamma (PPAR-gamma), a nuclear receptor which regulates large numbers of genes including those involved in lipid metabolism and insulin action. They reduce hepatic glucose production and enhance peripheral glucose uptake. They are used alone or in combination with other agents but their place in the routine therapy of type 2 diabetes remains unclear. Side-effects are weight gain, fluid retention and heart failure, anaemia and osteoporosis. They are contraindicated in patients with heart failure.
- *Other therapies:*
  - Acarbose inhibits intestinal  $\alpha$ -glucosidases and impairs carbohydrate digestion and slows glucose absorption. Postprandial glucose peaks are reduced. Gastrointestinal side-effects, e.g. flatulence, bloating and diarrhoea, are common and limit the dose and acceptability of this treatment.
  - Weight loss is associated with improved diabetic control and even remission of diabetes. Orlistat is an intestinal lipase inhibitor and reduces the absorption of fat from the diet. It promotes weight loss

in patients under careful dietary supervision on a low fat diet. Gastric banding and gastric bypass surgery should be offered to those with marked obesity unresponsive to 6 months intensive attempts at dieting and graded exercise.

**Insulin treatment** Almost all insulin now used in developed countries is synthetic (recombinant) human insulin. Insulin is administered by an injection into the fat below the skin (subcutaneous) on the abdomen, thighs or upper arm. The injection site should be changed frequently to prevent areas of lipohypertrophy (fatty lumps). Patients who are started on insulin have a legal duty to inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). In addition, those who experience complications of insulin such as frequent hypoglycaemic episodes or impaired awareness of hypoglycaemia may be unfit to drive.

There are three main types of insulin:

1. *Short-acting (soluble) insulins* start working within 30–60 minutes and last for 4–6 hours. They are given 15–30 minutes before meals in patients on multiple dose regimens and by continuous intravenous infusion in labour, during medical emergencies, at the time of surgery and in patients using insulin pumps.
2. *Short-acting insulin analogues*. The human insulin analogues (insulin aspart, insulin lispro, insulin glulisine) have a faster onset and shorter duration of action than soluble insulin but overall do not improve diabetic control. They have a reduced carry-over effect compared to soluble insulin and are used with the evening meal in patients who are prone to nocturnal hypoglycaemia.
3. *Longer-acting insulins*. Insulins premixed with retarding agents (either protamine or zinc) precipitate crystals of varying size according to the conditions employed. These insulins are intermediate (12–24 hours) or long acting (more than 24 hours). The protamine insulins are also known as isophane or NPH insulins, and the zinc insulins as lente insulins. Insulin glargine is a structurally modified insulin that precipitates in tissues and is then slowly released from the injection site.

In young patients a reasonable starting regimen is subcutaneous injection of an intermediate-acting insulin, 8–10 units administered half an hour before breakfast and before the evening meal. In many patients who present acutely with diabetes there is some recovery of endogenous insulin secretion soon after diagnosis ('the honeymoon period') and the insulin dose may need to be reduced. Requirements rise thereafter, and a multiple injection regimen (often using a 'pen injector' device), which may improve control and allows greater meal flexibility, is then appropriate for most younger patients. An example of this is soluble insulin administered before each meal and an intermediate-acting insulin given at bedtime. Target blood values should normally be 4–7 mmol/L before meals and 4–10 mmol/L after meals. An



alternative to multiple injections is to use a small pump strapped to the waist, which delivers a continuous subcutaneous insulin infusion (CSII). Meal-time doses are delivered when the patient presses a button on the side of the pump.

In many patients with type 2 diabetes who eventually require insulin, a twice-daily regimen of premixed soluble and isophane insulin (e.g. Mixtard) is suitable.

### Complications of insulin therapy

- *Hypoglycaemia* is the most common complication of insulin treatment (see below)
- *At the injection site* – lipohypertrophy (see above), local allergic reactions and rarely injection site abscesses
- *Insulin resistance* – most commonly mild and associated with obesity
- *Weight gain* – insulin makes patients feel hungry and it essential they maintain a careful dietary regimen to prevent weight gain.

**Hypoglycaemia during insulin treatment** This may also occur in patients taking sulfonylureas. Insulin or sulfonylurea therapy for diabetes accounts for the vast majority of cases of severe hypoglycaemia encountered in an accident and emergency department; other causes of hypoglycaemia are much less common.

Symptoms of sympathetic overactivity usually develop when blood glucose levels fall below 3.0 mmol/L and include hunger, sweating, pallor and tachycardia. Untreated, the symptoms of neuroglycopenia develop and later there is personality change, fits, occasionally hemiparesis, and finally coma. In patients with longstanding diabetes and autonomic neuropathy the early 'adrenergic features' may be absent and as a result patients go from feeling normal to developing severe hypoglycaemia without warning.

Immediate diagnosis and treatment are essential. A blood glucose confirms the diagnosis but treatment should begin immediately (while waiting for the result) if hypoglycaemia is suspected on clinical grounds. A rapidly absorbed carbohydrate, e.g. 50–100 mL fizzy non-diet drink (e.g. lemonade or coke) or GlucoGel (40% dextrose gel) should be given orally if possible. In unconscious patients, treatment is with intravenous dextrose (50 mL of 50% dextrose into a large vein though a large-gauge needle) followed by a flush of normal saline, as concentrated dextrose is highly irritant. Intramuscular glucagon (1 mg) acts rapidly by mobilizing hepatic glycogen and is particularly useful where intravenous access is difficult. Oral glucose is given to replenish glycogen reserves once the patient revives. Hypoglycaemia may recur after treatment, particularly if it is a result of treatment with longacting insulin preparations or sulfonylureas. These patients should be monitored with hourly (4-hourly when stable) blood glucose readings and may require a 10% dextrose drip to prevent recurrent hypoglycaemia.

## Whole pancreas and pancreatic islet transplantation

Whole pancreas transplantation is sometimes performed, usually in diabetic patients who require immunosuppression for a kidney transplant. Lasting graft function can be achieved, but the procedure adds to the risks of renal transplantation. Islet transplantation is also performed by harvesting pancreatic islets from cadavers and injecting these into the portal vein. These then seed themselves into the liver. While results are improving, this form of treatment remains experimental.

## Measuring the metabolic control of diabetes

Patients may feel well and be asymptomatic even if their blood glucose is consistently above the normal range. Self-monitoring at home is therefore necessary because of the immediate risks of hyper- and hypoglycaemia, and because it has been shown that persistently good control (i.e. near normoglycaemia) reduces the risk of progression to retinopathy, nephropathy and neuropathy in both type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

### Home testing

- Most patients, especially those on insulin, are taught to monitor control by testing finger-prick blood samples with reagent strips and reading these with the aid of a meter. Patients are asked to take regular profiles (e.g. four times daily samples on 2 days each week) and to note these in a diary or record book.
- Urine testing for glucose (using Stix) is a crude measure of glycaemic control because glycosuria only appears above the renal threshold for glucose (which varies between a blood glucose of 7 and 13 mmol/L) and because urine glucose lags behind blood glucose. It is usually reserved for patients who will not perform capillary blood glucose monitoring at home.
- Urine ketones, also measured with Stix (Ketostix), are useful if the patient is unwell, because ketonuria indicates potentially serious metabolic derangement.

**Hospital (clinic) testing** Single random blood glucose measurements are of limited value:

- Glycosylated haemoglobin ( $\text{HbA}_{1c}$ ) is produced by the attachment of glucose to Hb. Measurement of this Hb fraction (expressed as mmol per mol of haemoglobin without glucose attached) is a useful measure of the average glucose concentration over the life of the Hb molecule (approximately 6 weeks). The non-diabetic reference range is 20–42 mmol/mol. The target value for a diabetic patient is  $\text{HbA}_{1c}$  of 48–59 mmol/mol. Pursuing lower  $\text{HbA}_{1c}$  values risks hypoglycaemia, curtailing quality of life in the effort to achieve the target.
- Glycosylated plasma proteins (fructosamine) are less reliable than  $\text{HbA}_{1c}$  but may be useful in certain situations, e.g. thalassaemia where haemoglobin is abnormal.

## DIABETIC METABOLIC EMERGENCIES

### Diabetic ketoacidosis

Diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) results from insulin deficiency and is seen in the following circumstances:

- Previously undiagnosed diabetes
- Interruption of insulin therapy
- The stress of intercurrent illness (e.g. infection or surgery).

Most cases of diabetic ketoacidosis are preventable. The most common error is for insulin to be reduced or stopped because the patient is not eating or is vomiting. *Insulin should never be stopped* and most patients need a larger dose when ill.

### Pathogenesis

Ketoacidosis is a state of uncontrolled catabolism associated with insulin deficiency. In the absence of insulin there is an unrestrained increase in hepatic gluconeogenesis. High circulating glucose levels result in an osmotic diuresis by the kidneys and consequent dehydration. In addition, peripheral lipolysis leads to an increase in circulating free fatty acids, which are converted within the liver to acidic ketones, leading to a metabolic acidosis. These processes are accelerated by the 'stress hormones' – catecholamines, glucagon and cortisol – which are secreted in response to dehydration and intercurrent illness.

### Clinical features

There is profound dehydration secondary to water and electrolyte loss from the kidney and exacerbated by vomiting. The eyes are sunken, tissue turgor is reduced, the tongue is dry and, in severe cases, the blood pressure is low. Kussmaul's respiration (deep rapid breathing) may be present, as a sign of respiratory compensation for metabolic acidosis, and the breath smells of ketones (similar to acetone). Some disturbance of consciousness is common, but only 5% present in coma. Body temperature is often subnormal despite intercurrent infection. A few patients have abdominal pain and rarely this may cause confusion with a surgical acute abdomen.

### Investigations

The diagnosis is based on the demonstration of hyperglycaemia in combination with acidosis and ketosis:

- Hyperglycaemia – blood glucose > 11 mmol/L
- Ketonaemia – blood ketones > 3.0 mmol/L. Blood ketones are best measured using a finger prick sample and near-patient meter which

measures  $\beta$ -hydroxybutyrate, the major ketone in DKA. If not available, plasma ketones can be semi-quantitatively measured in the supernatant of a centrifuged blood sample using a dipstick that measures ketones

- Acidosis – blood pH < 7.3 and/or bicarbonate ( $\text{HCO}_3$ ) < 15 mmol/L. Venous blood gives similar pH and  $\text{HCO}_3$  to arterial. Acidosis is high anion gap (p. 349)
- Urine Stix testing shows heavy glycosuria and ketonuria
- Serum urea and electrolytes. Urea and creatinine are often raised as a result of dehydration. The total body potassium is low as a result of osmotic diuresis, but the serum potassium concentration is often raised because of the absence of the action of insulin, which allows potassium to shift out of cells
- Full blood count may show an elevated white cell count even in the absence of infection
- Further investigations are directed towards identifying a precipitating cause: blood cultures, chest radiograph and urine microscopy and culture to look for evidence of infection, and an ECG and cardiac proteins to look for evidence of myocardial infarction.

## Management

Immediate emergency management (ABC) is necessary in all patients. Admission to the intensive care unit is recommended in the seriously ill. The aims of treatment are to replace fluid and electrolyte loss (Table 15.4), replace insulin, and restore acid–base balance over a period of about 24 hours (Emergency Box 15.1). Therapy of diabetic ketoacidosis shifts potassium into cells, resulting in profound hypokalaemia and death if not treated prospectively. Cerebral oedema (presents with headache, irritability, reduced conscious level) may complicate therapy and results from rapid lowering of blood glucose and osmolality. When the patient has recovered, it is necessary to determine the cause of the episode and advice and information provided to prevent recurrence.

### Hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic state

This is a life-threatening emergency characterized by marked hyperglycaemia, hyperosmolality and mild or no ketosis. It is the metabolic emergency

**Table 15.4** Average loss of fluid and electrolytes in an adult with ketoacidosis

|           |          |
|-----------|----------|
| Water     | 5–7 L    |
| Sodium    | 500 mmol |
| Potassium | 350 mmol |



## Emergency Box 15.1

### Management of diabetic ketoacidosis

#### Phase 1 management

- Fluid replacement: 0.9% sodium chloride with 20 mmol KCl per L. An average regimen would be 1 L in 30 minutes, then 1 L in 1 hour, then 1 L in 2 hours, then 1 L in 4 hours, then 1 L in 6 hours
- Insulin: soluble insulin 6 units/h by intravenous infusion, or 20 units i.m. stat. followed by 6 units i.m. hourly. Aim for fall in blood glucose of approx. 5 mmol/h. Adjust infusion rate by 50% to achieve this
- Adjust KCl concentration depending on results of 2 hours' blood K measurement. Temporarily delay if serum potassium >5.0 mmol/L. Increase to 30–40 mmol/L if serum potassium is low, e.g. <3.5 mmol/L.

IF:

- Blood pressure below 80 mmHg, give plasma expander (colloid, p. 326)
- pH below 7.0 give 500 mL of sodium bicarbonate 1.26% plus 10 mmol KCl over 1 hour. Repeat if necessary to bring pH up to 7.0.

#### Phase 2 management

- When blood glucose falls to 10–12 mmol/L change infusion fluid to 1 L 5% dextrose plus 20 mmol KCl 6-hourly. Continue insulin (necessary to switch off ketogenesis) with dose adjusted according to hourly blood glucose test results (e.g. i.v. 3 units/h glucose 15 mmol/L; 2 units/h when glucose 10 mmol/L).

#### Phase 3 management

- Once stable and able to eat and drink normally, transfer patient to four-times-daily subcutaneous insulin regimen (based on previous 24 hours insulin consumption, and trend in consumption). Overlap s/c insulin with insulin infusion by 30 minutes.

#### Special measures

- Broad-spectrum antibiotic if infection likely
- Bladder catheter if no urine passed in 2 hours
- Nasogastric tube if drowsy or protracted vomiting
- Consider CVP pressure monitoring if shocked or if previous cardiac or renal impairment
- Consider s.c. prophylactic heparin in comatose, elderly or obese patients.

#### Monitoring

- Vital signs, volume of fluid given and urine output hourly
- Finger prick glucose hourly for 8 hours
- Laboratory glucose and electrolytes 2-hourly for 8 hours, then 4–6 hourly, adjust K replacement according to results.

*Note:* The regimen of fluid replacement set out above is a guide for patients with severe ketoacidosis. Excessive fluid can precipitate pulmonary and cerebral oedema; adequate replacement must therefore be tailored to the individual and monitored carefully throughout treatment.

characteristic of uncontrolled type 2 diabetes mellitus (often previously undiagnosed). Infection is the most common precipitating cause, particularly pneumonia.

## Clinical features

Endogenous insulin levels are reduced but are still sufficient to inhibit hepatic ketogenesis, whereas glucose production is unrestrained. Patients present with profound dehydration (secondary to an osmotic diuresis) and a decreased level of consciousness, which is directly related to the elevation of plasma osmolality. The main biochemical differences between ketoacidosis and the hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic state are illustrated in Table 15.5.

## Management

Investigations and treatment are the same as for ketoacidosis with the exception that a lower rate of insulin infusion (3 U/h) is often sufficient, as these patients are extremely sensitive to insulin. The rate may be doubled after 2–3 h if glucose is falling too slowly. The hyperosmolar state predisposes to stroke, myocardial infarction, or arterial thrombosis, and prophylactic subcutaneous heparin is given.

## Prognosis

Mortality rate is around 20–30%, mainly because of the advanced age of the patients and the frequency of inter-current illness. Unlike ketoacidosis, the hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic state is not an absolute indication for subsequent insulin therapy, and survivors may do well on diet and oral agents.

**Table 15.5** Typical biochemistry in diabetic ketoacidosis and the hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic state illustrating the main differences

| Examples of blood values               | Severe ketoacidosis | Hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic state |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Na <sup>+</sup> (mmol/L)               | 140                 | 155                               |
| K <sup>+</sup> (mmol/L)                | 5                   | 5                                 |
| Cl <sup>-</sup> (mmol/L)               | 100                 | 110                               |
| HCO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup> (mmol/L) | 15                  | 25                                |
| Urea (mmol/L)                          | 8                   | 15                                |
| Glucose (mmol/L)                       | 30                  | 50                                |
| Serum osmolality (mOsm/kg)*            | 328                 | 385                               |
| Arterial pH                            | 7.0                 | 7.35                              |

\*See page 324 for definition and discussion of plasma osmolality

## Lactic acidosis

This is a rare complication in patients taking metformin; the mortality is high. Patients present with severe metabolic acidosis without significant hyperglycaemia or ketosis. Treatment is by rehydration and infusion of isotonic 1.26% bicarbonate.

## COMPLICATIONS OF DIABETES

Patients with diabetes have a reduced life expectancy. Cardiovascular problems (70%) followed by chronic kidney disease (10%) and infections (6%) are the most common causes of premature death in treated patients. Complications are directly related to the degree and duration of hyperglycaemia and can be reduced by improved diabetic control.

## Vascular

### Macrovascular complications

Diabetes is a risk factor for atherosclerosis and this is additive with other risk factors for large vessel disease, e.g. smoking, hypertension and hyperlipidaemia. Atherosclerosis results in stroke, ischaemic heart disease and peripheral vascular disease. The risk is reduced not only by good diabetic control but also modification of other risk factors. This includes aggressive control of blood pressure (target <130/80 mmHg), cessation of smoking, treatment with a statin for most type 2 diabetics irrespective of serum cholesterol, and treatment with an angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor (or angiotensin II receptor antagonist in the event of ACE inhibitor intolerance, usually a cough) for patients with one other major cardiovascular risk factor. Some patients depending on age and other cardiovascular risk factors are also treated with low-dose aspirin.

### Microvascular complications

In contrast to macrovascular disease, microvascular disease is specific to diabetes. Small vessels throughout the body are affected, but the disease process is of particular danger in three sites: the retina, the renal glomerulus and the nerve sheath. Diabetic retinopathy, nephropathy and neuropathy tend to manifest 10–20 years after diagnosis in young patients. They present earlier in older patients, probably because they have had unrecognized diabetes for months or even years before diagnosis.

## Diabetic eye disease

About one-third of young diabetics develop visual problems, and in the UK 5% have become blind after 30 years of diabetes. However, the prevalence is falling. Diabetes affects the eye in a variety of ways:

- Diabetic retinopathy with lesions developing in the retina and the iris
- Cataracts develop earlier in diabetics than in the general population. Temporary blurred vision also occurs caused by reversible osmotic changes in the lens in patients with acute hyperglycaemia
- External ocular palsies – the sixth and third nerve are most commonly affected (p. 731).

## Retinopathy

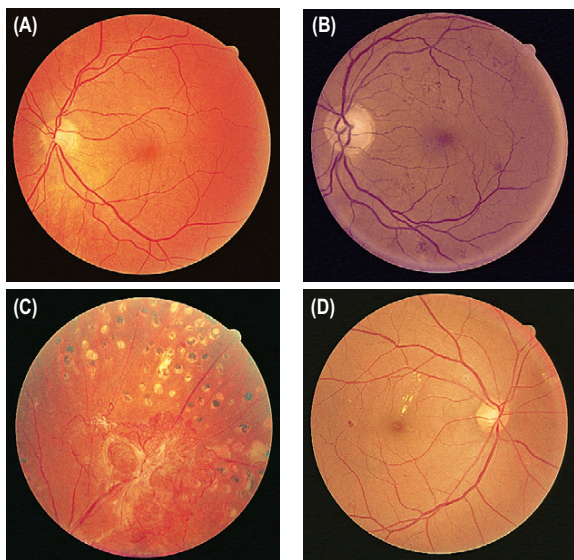
Diabetes is the most common cause of blindness in people under 65 years old. At diagnosis almost 30% of people with diabetes have early retinal damage (background retinopathy) which increases as the duration of diabetes increases. Diabetic retinopathy is divided into two major forms: non-proliferative and proliferative, named for the absence or presence of abnormal new blood vessels (neovascularization) arising from the retina (Table 15.6

**Table 15.6** Classification of diabetic retinopathy

| Retinopathy grade            | Retinal abnormality (cause of abnormality)   |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Peripheral retina</b>     |  |
| Non-proliferative/background | Tiny red dots (capillary microaneurysms)<br>Larger red spots (intraretinal 'blot' haemorrhages)<br>*Hard exudates (capillary leaks of plasma rich in lipids and protein) |
| Pre-proliferative            | Venous beading/loops<br>Growth of intraretinal new vessels<br>*Multiple cotton wool spots (oedema from retinal infarcts)   |
| Proliferative                | Preretinal new (fragile) blood vessel formation<br>Preretinal or subhyaloid haemorrhage (from above)<br>Vitreous haemorrhage   |
| Advanced retinopathy         | Retinal fibrosis<br>Traction retinal detachment  |
| <b>Central retina</b>        |  |
| Maculopathy                  | Macula oedema<br>Perimacular hard exudates   |

*NB: \*hard exudates have a bright yellowish white colour and are often irregular in outline with a sharply defined margin. Cotton-wool spots are greyish white, have indistinct margins and a dull matt surface, unlike the glossy appearance of hard exudates.*





**Fig. 15.2** Some features of diabetic eye disease. (A) The normal macula (centre) and optic disc. (B) Dot and blot haemorrhages (early background retinopathy). (C) Multiple frond-like new vessels, the hallmark of proliferative retinopathy. White fibrous tissue is forming near the new vessels, a feature of advanced retinopathy (this eye also illustrates multiple xenon arc laser burns superiorly). (D) Exudates appearing within a disc-width of the macula are a feature of an exudative maculopathy.

and Fig. 15.2). Proliferative retinopathy develops as a consequence of damage to retinal blood vessels and the resultant retinal ischaemia which occurs in non-proliferative retinopathy. Most patients are asymptomatic until the late (and often untreatable) stages. Retinal screening programmes for people with diabetes perform annual assessment of visual acuity and digital retinal photography by trained staff. Patients with background retinopathy need annual review only to look for progression to maculopathy or proliferative retinopathy. All other forms of retinopathy require referral to an ophthalmologist, urgently in the case of proliferative and advanced retinopathy as vision is immediately threatened. New vessel formation and maculopathy are treated by laser photocoagulation of the retina. The development and progression of retinopathy is accelerated by poor glycaemic control, hypertension and smoking.

## The diabetic kidney

The kidney may be damaged by diabetes as a result of:

- Glomerular disease
- Ischaemic renal lesions
- Ascending urinary tract infection.

**Diabetic nephropathies** Clinical nephropathy secondary to glomerular disease usually manifests 15–25 years after diagnosis and affects 25–35% of patients diagnosed under the age of 30 years. On microscopy there is thickening of the glomerular basement membrane and later glomerulosclerosis, which may be a diffuse or nodular form (Kimmelstiel–Wilson lesion). The earliest clinical evidence of glomerular damage is ‘microalbuminuria’ – an increase above the normal range in urinary albumin excretion but undetectable by conventional dipsticks (p. 358). This may, after some years, progress to intermittent albuminuria followed by persistent proteinuria, sometimes with a frank nephrotic syndrome. At the stage of persistent proteinuria the plasma creatinine is normal but the average patient is only some 5–10 years from end-stage kidney disease.

The urine of all patients should be checked at least once a year by dipsticks for the presence of protein. Most centres also screen for microalbuminuria, because meticulous glycaemic control and treatment with angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors at this stage (even in the absence of hypertension) may delay the onset of frank proteinuria. Aggressive control of blood pressure (target below 130/80 mmHg) is the most important factor to reduce disease progression in those with established proteinuria – ACE inhibitors (or angiotensin receptor II antagonists for those intolerant) are the treatment of choice. Many will develop end-stage kidney disease and need dialysis and eventually renal transplantation. A segmental pancreatic graft is sometimes performed at the same time as a renal graft.

**Ischaemic lesions** Arteriolar lesions with hypertrophy and hyalinization of the vessels affect both afferent and efferent arterioles. The appearances are similar to those of hypertensive disease but are not necessarily related to the blood pressure in patients with diabetes.

**Infective lesions** Urinary tract infections are common (p. 370). A rare complication is renal papillary necrosis, in which renal papillae are shed in the urine and may cause ureteral obstruction.

## Diabetic neuropathy

The types of diabetic neuropathy are summarized in Table 15.7. Isolated mononeuropathies are thought to result from occlusion of the vasa nervorum (the small arteries that provide blood supply to the peripheral nerves) while the other more diffuse neuropathies may arise from accumulation of fructose

**Table 15.7** Diabetic neuropathies

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Progressive | Symmetrical sensory polyneuropathy                         |
|             | Autonomic neuropathy                                       |
| Reversible  | Acute painful neuropathy                                   |
|             | Mononeuropathy and mononeuritis multiplex                  |
|             | Cranial nerve lesions<br>Isolated peripheral nerve lesions |
|             | Diabetic amyotrophy  |

and sorbitol (metabolized from glucose in peripheral nerves) which disrupts the structure and function of the nerve.

**Symmetrical mainly sensory neuropathy** This is the most common form of neuropathy and affects the feet first. It is often unrecognized by the patient in the early stages. Early clinical signs are loss of vibration sense, pain sensation (deep before superficial) and temperature sensation in the feet. At later stages patients may complain of 'walking on cotton wool' and may lose their balance when walking in the dark or while washing the face due to impaired proprioception. Involvement of the hands is uncommon. Complications include unrecognized trauma, beginning as blistering caused by an ill-fitting shoe or a hot-water bottle, and leading to ulceration. Abnormal mechanical stress and repeated minor trauma, usually prevented by pain, may lead to the development of a neuropathic arthropathy (Charcot's joints) in the ankle and knee, where the joint is grossly deformed and swollen. Involvement of the motor nerves may lead to wasting of the small muscles of the hand and a distorted foot with a high arch and clawing of the toes. All patients with diabetic sensory neuropathy are at risk of insensitive foot ulceration. They should learn the principles of foot care (p. 686) and visit a chiropodist regularly.

**Acute painful neuropathy** The patient describes burning or crawling pains in the lower limbs. Symptoms are typically worse at night, and pressure from bedclothes may be intolerable. Treatment is with good diabetic control, tricyclic antidepressants, gabapentin or carbamazepine.

**Mononeuritis and mononeuritis multiplex (multiple mononeuropathy)** One or more individual nerves are affected including involvement of a spinal root (radiculopathy). Onset may be abrupt and painful. Lesions are more likely to occur at common sites for external pressure, e.g. carpal tunnel syndrome. The most common cranial mononeuropathies are the third and sixth nerves supplying the extraocular muscles. Presentation is with unilateral pain, ptosis, and diplopia, with sparing of pupillary function.

**Diabetic amyotrophy** presents with painful wasting, usually asymmetrical, of the quadriceps muscles. The wasting may be marked and knee reflexes are diminished or absent.

**Autonomic neuropathy** affects the cardiovascular system (resting tachycardia and loss of sinus arrhythmia, postural hypotension and peripheral vasodilation with a warm foot and bounding pulse), gastrointestinal tract (diarrhoea and gastroparesis leading to intractable vomiting), bladder (incomplete emptying followed by an atonic painless distended bladder) and male erectile dysfunction. There is no specific treatment and management is based on a symptom approach.

## The diabetic foot

Foot problems are a major cause of morbidity and mortality in patients with diabetes mellitus, with infection, ischaemia and neuropathy all contributing to produce tissue necrosis. On physical examination evidence of a neuropathy is demonstrated by reduced sensation to vibration, temperature and pin-prick. There may be evidence of Charcot arthropathy. Signs of vascular disease in the lower leg include thin skin and absence of hair, bluish discoloration of the skin, reduced skin temperature and absent foot pulses. Many diabetic foot ulcers are avoidable, so patients need to learn the principles of foot care: well-fitting lace-up shoes, regular chiropody, no 'bathroom' surgery, daily inspection of feet and early advice for any damage, and finally avoiding sources of heat, such as radiators and hot bath water. Management of foot lesions involves:

- Swabbing of ulcers for bacterial culture and early antibiotic treatment
- Good local wound care and, if necessary, surgical debridement of ulcers
- Evaluation for peripheral vascular disease by clinical examination, measurement of blood flow (by Doppler probe) and femoral angiography if clinically indicated
- Reconstructive vascular surgery for localized areas of arterial occlusion.

## Infections

Poorly controlled diabetes impairs the function of polymorphonuclear leucocytes and confers an increased risk of infection, particularly of the urinary tract and skin, e.g. cellulitis, boils and abscesses. Tuberculosis and mucocutaneous candidiasis are more common in diabetic individuals. Infections may lead to loss of glycaemic control and are a common cause of ketoacidosis. Insulin-treated patients may need to increase their insulin therapy even if they feel nauseated and unable to eat. Non-insulin-treated patients may need insulin for the same reasons.

## The skin

- Lipohypertrophy (fat lumps at frequently used insulin injection sites) are avoided by varying the injection site from day to day.

- Necrobiosis lipoidica diabetorum is an unusual complication of diabetes characterized by erythematous plaques, often over the shins, which gradually develop a brown waxy discoloration.
- Vitiligo is symmetrical white patches seen in diabetes mellitus and other organ-specific autoimmune diseases.
- Granuloma annulare – flesh-coloured rings and nodules, principally over the extensor surfaces of the fingers.

## SPECIAL SITUATIONS

### Surgery

Diabetic patients should be screened in advance for complications (e.g. cardiovascular or renal disease, autonomic neuropathy) which increase the surgical risk. Smooth control of diabetes minimizes the risk of infection and balances the catabolic response to anaesthesia and surgery. Treatment should be intensified in poorly controlled diabetics ( $HbA_{1c} > 70$  mmol/mol or random blood glucose  $> 11$  mmol/L) prior to surgery or patients admitted the night before for an insulin sliding scale if surgery is urgent, e.g. cancer. Where possible diabetic patients should be first on the operating list and a blood glucose of 6–11 mmol/L maintained during the perioperative period. Hypoglycaemia developing perioperatively is treated as previously described (p. 675).

### Major surgery (i.e. having a general anaesthetic):

- Normal subcutaneous insulin doses are given the day before surgery.
- On the day of surgery omit morning insulin or oral hypoglycaemic (except stop metformin 24 hours before as risk of lactic acidosis). A glucose/insulin/potassium infusion is started at 08:00 am with hourly glucose monitoring. A standard combination is 16 U of soluble insulin with 10 mmol of KCL in 500 ml of 10% glucose infused at 100 mL/h – the insulin can also be administered separately via a syringe pump.
- The insulin dose is adjusted by +/- 4 U if blood sugars are persistently high or low respectively and potassium also adjusted depending on serum measurements.
- Postoperatively the infusion is maintained until the patient is eating and drinking normally. The normal insulin regimen is restarted with a 30 minute overlap with the infusion.

### Minor surgery (e.g. endoscopy):

**Insulin-treated patients** On the day of surgery omit morning insulin (unless long-acting insulin in which case give two-thirds dose). Check blood glucose every 2 hours. Once the patient is eating and drinking after procedure give two-thirds of normal *morning* insulin (if twice a day regimen of insulin normally given) or normal dose of rapidly acting insulin (if four times a day regimen normally given) and tea-time insulin as normal.

**Tablet-controlled diabetes** Omit diabetes medication on the morning of procedure. Check blood glucose 2-hourly. Restart oral hypoglycaemics with first meal.

## Pregnancy and diabetes

Poorly controlled diabetes at the time of conception and during pregnancy is associated with congenital malformations, macrosomia (large babies), hydramnios, pre-eclampsia and intrauterine death. In the neonatal period there is an increased risk of hyaline membrane disease and neonatal hypoglycaemia (unlike insulin, maternal glucose crosses the placenta and causes hypersecretion of insulin from the fetal islets, which continues when the umbilical cord is cut). Meticulous control of blood glucose levels (assessed by daily home blood testing before and 2 hours after meals) achieves results comparable to those with non-diabetic pregnancies.

Gestational diabetes is diabetes that develops in the course of pregnancy and remits following delivery. Treatment is with diet in the first instance, but most patients require insulin cover during pregnancy. It is likely to recur in subsequent pregnancies, and diabetes may develop later in life.

## Acutely ill hospital inpatients

Acutely ill diabetic patients are susceptible to hyperglycaemia because of increased release of counter-regulatory stress hormones (adrenaline, cortisol and growth hormone), physical inactivity and possibly an alteration in diet. Good glucose control reduces mortality in acute myocardial infarction, stroke and critically ill patients on ITU. Metformin should not be given to an ill patient in hospital because of the risk of lactic acidosis. Patients who are not eating are managed with an insulin sliding scale (Table 15.8) with a target blood glucose of 4–9 mmol/L (4–7 in stroke and MI).

## Unstable diabetes

This is used to describe patients with recurrent ketoacidosis and/or recurrent hypoglycaemic coma. Of these, the largest group is made up of those who experience recurrent severe hypoglycaemia.

## HYPOGLYCAEMIA IN THE NON-DIABETIC

The causes and mechanism of hypoglycaemia are listed in Table 15.9.

## Insulinomas

These are rare pancreatic islet cell tumours (usually benign) that secrete insulin. They may be part of the multiple endocrine neoplasia syndrome (p. 658).

**Table 15.8** A sliding scale insulin regime\*

| Blood glucose (mmol/L) | Human Actrapid (units/hour) |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <4                     | 0.5                         |
| 4.1–7                  | 1                           |
| 7.1–11                 | 2                           |
| 11.1–15                | 3                           |
| 15.1–20                | 5                           |
| >20                    | 6                           |

\*Add 50 units of Human Actrapid to 49.5 ml of 0.9% sodium chloride in a syringe driver. Give intravenous insulin as above depending on hourly stix testing.

Fluid guide (assuming normal potassium and sodium) – if blood glucose > 12 mmol/L give 1 L of 0.9% sodium chloride with 20 mmol KCL over 10 hours; if blood glucose < 12 mmol/L give 1 L of 5% glucose with 20 mmol KCL over 10 hours. Use a separate cannula for insulin and fluids. Patients in heart failure can be given 500 ml 10% glucose over 10 hours.

**Table 15.9** Causes of hypoglycaemia

| Cause  | Mechanism of hypoglycaemia  |
|--|---|
| Drug induced: insulin, sulfonylureas, quinine, pentamidine, propranolol, salicylates in overdose | Variety of mechanisms   |
| Islet cell tumour of the pancreas (insulinoma)   | Inappropriately high circulating insulin levels   |
| Non-pancreatic tumours, e.g. sarcoma, hepatoma   | Secretion of IGF-1  |
| Endocrine causes: Addison's disease  | Impaired counter-regulation to the action of insulin                                    |
| Fulminant liver failure  | Failure of hepatic gluconeogenesis  |
| End-stage kidney disease   | Failure of renal cortical gluconeogenesis   |
| Excess alcohol   | Enhanced insulin response to carbohydrate<br>Inhibition of hepatic gluconeogenesis      |
| After gastric surgery  | Rapid gastric emptying, mismatch of food and insulin                                    |
| Factitious hypoglycaemia   | Surreptitious self-administration of insulin or sulphonylureas, often in a non-diabetic |

IGF-1, insulin-like growth factor: normally mainly produced by the liver, primarily a growth factor in physiological concentrations

## Clinical features

The classic presentation is with fasting hypoglycaemia. Hypoglycaemia produces symptoms as a result of neuroglycopenia and stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system. These include sweating, palpitations, diplopia and weakness, progressing to confusion, abnormal behaviour, fits and coma.

## Investigations

The diagnosis is made by demonstrating hypoglycaemia in association with inappropriate or excessive insulin secretion:

- Measurement of overnight fasting plasma glucose and insulin levels on three occasions
- Performing a prolonged 72-hour supervised fast if overnight testing is inconclusive and symptoms persist. Blood is taken at intervals for measurement of glucose, insulin and C-peptide.

A plasma insulin concentration of 3  $\mu\text{mL}$  or more when the plasma glucose is below 3.0 mmol/L indicates an excess of insulin. C-peptide is co-secreted from the pancreas with insulin and is used to distinguish endogenous hyperinsulinaemia (e.g. as a result of an insulinoma when C-peptide levels are detectable) from exogenous hyperinsulinaemia (e.g. due to factitious insulin administration when C-peptide levels are undetectable).

Further investigations are usually necessary to localize tumours before surgery as they are often very small. These include highly selective angiography, high-resolution CT scanning, scanning with radiolabelled somatostatin (some tumours express somatostatin receptors) and endoscopic ultrasound.

## Treatment

The treatment of choice is surgical excision of the tumour. Diazoxide, which inhibits insulin release from islet cells, is useful when the tumour is malignant, in patients in whom a tumour is very small and cannot be located, or in elderly patients with mild symptoms. Symptoms may also remit using a somatostatin analogue (octreotide or lanreotide).

## DISORDERS OF LIPID METABOLISM

Fats are transported in the bloodstream as lipoprotein particles composed of lipids (principally triglycerides, cholesterol and cholesterol esters), phospholipids and proteins (called apoproteins). These proteins exert a stabilizing function and allow the particles to be recognized by receptors in the liver and peripheral tissues.

There are five principal types of lipoprotein particles:

- *Chylomicrons* are synthesized in the small intestine postprandially and serve to transport the digestion products of dietary fat (mainly



triglycerides, small amounts of cholesterol) to the liver and peripheral tissues.

- *Very-low-density lipoproteins (VLDLs)* are synthesized and secreted by the liver and transport endogenously synthesized triglycerides (formed in the liver from plasma free fatty acids) to the periphery. In fat and muscle, triglycerides are removed from chylomicrons and VLDLs by the tissue enzyme lipoprotein lipase and the essential cofactor apoprotein C-II.
- *Intermediate-density lipoproteins (IDLs)*, derived from the peripheral breakdown of VLDLs, are transported back to the liver and metabolized to yield the cholesterol-rich particles – low-density lipoproteins (LDLs).
- *Low-density lipoproteins (LDLs)* deliver most cholesterol to the periphery and liver with subsequent binding to LDL receptors in these tissues.
- *High-density lipoproteins (HDLs)* transport cholesterol from peripheral tissues to the liver. HDL particles carry 20–30% of the total quantity of cholesterol in the blood.

The major clinical significance of hypercholesterolaemia (both total plasma and LDL concentration) is as a risk factor for atheroma and hence ischaemic heart disease. The risk is greatest in those with other cardiovascular risk factors, e.g. smoking and hypertension. There is a weak independent link between raised concentrations of (triglyceride-rich) VLDL particles and cardiovascular risk. More than half of all patients aged under 60 with angiographically confirmed coronary heart disease have a lipoprotein disorder. Severe hypertriglyceridaemia (>6 mmol/L) is associated with a greatly increased risk of acute pancreatitis and retinal vein thrombosis. In contrast, HDL particles, which transport cholesterol away from the periphery, appear to protect against atheroma.

## Measurement of plasma lipids

Most patients with hyperlipidaemia are asymptomatic, with no clinical signs, and they are discovered through routine screening (Table 15.10). A fasting

**Table 15.10** Indications for measurement of plasma lipids

|  |
|--|
| Family history of coronary heart disease (especially below 50 years of age)  |
| First-degree relative with a lipid disorder  |
| Prospective partner of patients with heterozygous monogenic lipid disorder (because of the risk of producing children with the disorder) |
| Presence of a xanthoma   |
| Presence of xanthelasma or corneal arcus before age 40 years   |
| Obesity  |
| Diabetes mellitus  |
| Hypertension   |
| Acute pancreatitis   |
| Patients undergoing renal replacement therapy  |

blood sample is necessary to test for hypertriglyceridaemia; random is sufficient for cholesterol. If the total cholesterol concentration is raised, HDL cholesterol, triglyceride and LDL cholesterol should be measured on a fasting sample. Specific diagnosis of the defect (see below) requires the measurement of individual lipoproteins by electrophoresis, but this is not usually necessary. If a lipid disorder has been detected it is vital to carry out a clinical history, examination and simple special investigations (i.e. plasma glucose, urea and electrolytes, liver biochemistry and thyroid function tests) to detect the causes of secondary hyperlipidaemia (Table 15.11).

## The primary hyperlipidaemias

### Disorders of VLDL and chylomicrons – hypertriglyceridaemia alone

- Polygenic hypertriglyceridaemia accounts for most cases, in which there are many genes both acting together and interacting with environmental factors to produce a modest elevation in serum triglyceride levels.
- Familial hypertriglyceridaemia is inherited in an autosomal dominant fashion. The exact defect is not known and the only clinical feature is a history of acute pancreatitis or retinal vein thrombosis in some individuals.
- Lipoprotein lipase deficiency and apoprotein C-II deficiency are rare diseases which usually present in childhood with severe hypertriglyceridaemia complicated by pancreatitis, retinal vein thrombosis and eruptive xanthomas – crops of small yellow lipid deposits in the skin.

### Disorders of LDL – hypercholesterolaemia alone

- Familial hypercholesterolaemia is the result of underproduction of the LDL cholesterol receptor in the liver, which results in high plasma concentrations of LDL cholesterol. Heterozygotes may be asymptomatic or develop coronary artery disease in their 40s. Typical clinical features include tendon xanthomas (lipid nodules in the tendons, especially the extensor

**Table 15.11** Causes of secondary hyperlipidaemia

|   |
|---|
| Hypothyroidism  |
| Poorly controlled diabetes mellitus   |
| Obesity   |
| Renal impairment  |
| Nephrotic syndrome  |
| Dysglobulinaemia  |
| Hepatic dysfunction   |
| Drugs: oral contraceptives in susceptible individuals, retinoids, thiazide diuretics, corticosteroids |

tendons of the fingers and the Achilles tendon) and xanthelasmas. Homozygotes have a total absence of LDL receptors in the liver. They have grossly elevated plasma cholesterol levels ( $>16$  mmol/L) and, without treatment, die in their teens from coronary artery disease.

- Mutations in the apoprotein B-100 gene result in a clinical picture resembling heterozygous familial hypercholesterolaemia. LDL particles normally bind to their clearance receptor in the liver through apoprotein B-100, and the mutation results in high LDL concentrations in the blood.
- Polygenic hypercholesterolaemia accounts for those patients with a raised serum cholesterol concentration, but without one of the monogenic disorders above. The precise nature of the polygenic variation in plasma cholesterol remains unknown.

### Combined hyperlipidaemia (hypercholesterolaemia and hyperlipidaemia)

Polygenic combined hyperlipidaemia and familial combined hyperlipidaemia account for the vast majority of patients in this group. A small minority is the result of the rare condition, remnant hyperlipidaemia.

## Management of hyperlipidaemia

### Guidelines to therapy

The initial treatment in all cases of hyperlipidaemia is dietary modification, but additional measures are usually necessary. Patients with familial hypercholesterolaemia will need drug treatment. Secondary hyperlipidaemia should be managed by treatment of the underlying condition wherever possible. In all patients, other treatable cardiovascular risk factors, including smoking, hypertension and excess weight should also be addressed in tandem with treatment of hyperlipidaemia.

### Lipid-lowering diet

- Dairy products and meat are the principal sources of fat in the diet. Chicken and poultry should be substituted for red meats and the food grilled rather than fried. Low-fat cheeses and skimmed milk should be substituted for the full-fat varieties.
- Polyunsaturated fats, e.g. corn and soya oil, should be used instead of saturated fats.
- Reduction of cholesterol intake from liver, offal and fish roe.
- Increased intake of soluble fibres, e.g. pulses and legumes, which reduce circulating cholesterol.
- Avoid excess alcohol and obesity, both causes of secondary hyperlipidaemias.

### Lipid-lowering drugs (Table 15.12)

- HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors (statins), e.g. atorvastatin, pravastatin, simvastatin, inhibit the enzyme hydroxymethylglutaryl-coenzyme A

**Table 15.12** Drugs used in the management of hyperlipidaemias (listed in the order in which they are usually selected for treatment)

| Hypertriglyceridaemia | Hypercholesterolaemia   | Combined       |
|-----------------------|---|----------------|
| Fibrates              | Statins   | Fibrates       |
| Nicotinic acid        | Ezetimibe/fibrates  | Nicotinic acid |
| Fish oil capsules     | Bile acid-binding resins<br>( $\omega$ -3 marine triglycerides) |                |

(HMG-CoA) reductase, an enzyme involved in cholesterol synthesis in the liver. They are the most potent of the lipid lowering drug classes for lowering total cholesterol and LDL-cholesterol and they also raise HDL-cholesterol and lower triglycerides to some extent. Side-effects of statins include hepatitis, muscle injury and gastrointestinal problems (p. 700).

- Cholesterol absorption inhibitors, e.g. ezetimibe, inhibit gut absorption of cholesterol from food and also from bile. The mechanism of this inhibition is unclear. They mostly act in the gut and little is absorbed. Thus short-term safety is good. They are used when a second drug in addition to a statin is required.
- Fibrates, e.g. gemfibrozil and bezafibrate, activate peroxisome proliferator-activated nuclear receptors (esp, PPAR-alpha) and are broad-spectrum lipid-modulating agents. They decrease serum triglycerides, raise HDL cholesterol and reduce LDL cholesterol concentrations. They are the drugs of first choice for treating isolated hypertriglyceridaemia and are used in combination with other treatments (statins, ezetimibe, fish oils) for patients with mixed dyslipidaemias. A rare but serious side-effect is myositis.
- Bile acid-binding resins, e.g. colestyramine and colestipol, bind bile acids in the intestine, preventing their reabsorption and thus lowering the cholesterol pool. They reduce LDL cholesterol and have a synergistic effect when given with a statin.
- Fish-oils, rich in omega-3 marine triglycerides, reduce plasma triglycerides.
- Nicotinic acid reduces total and LDL cholesterol levels and can reduce triglyceride levels. It is not widely used because of side-effects.

## Whom to treat

**Primary prevention for people at risk of cardiovascular disease** Lipid-lowering therapy using a statin, or alternatives as above, should be given to the following asymptomatic individuals irrespective of the total or LDL cholesterol level:

- Diabetes mellitus > 40 years of age or irrespective of age with retinopathy or persistent microalbuminuria
- A total cardiovascular disease risk of  $\geq 20\%$  over 10 years
- Two or more of: positive family history of cardiovascular disease, albuminuria, hypertension, smoking
- Men with LDL cholesterol persistently > 6.5 mmol/L despite dietary change. The situation for women is less clear
- Familial hypercholesterolaemia.

**Secondary prevention** Statin treatment is also indicated for any patient with known macrovascular disease (coronary artery disease, TIA or stroke, peripheral artery disease), irrespective of the total or LDL cholesterol level. Alternative and combination agents are ezetimibe, bile acid binding agents or fibrates (avoid with statins due to overlapping side-effects).

### Aims of treatment

Statins reduce cardiovascular events and all-cause mortality. Treatment should be adjusted to achieve a target total cholesterol of less than 4 mmol/L or a LDL-cholesterol concentration of less than 2.0 mmol/L.

## THE PORPHYRIAS

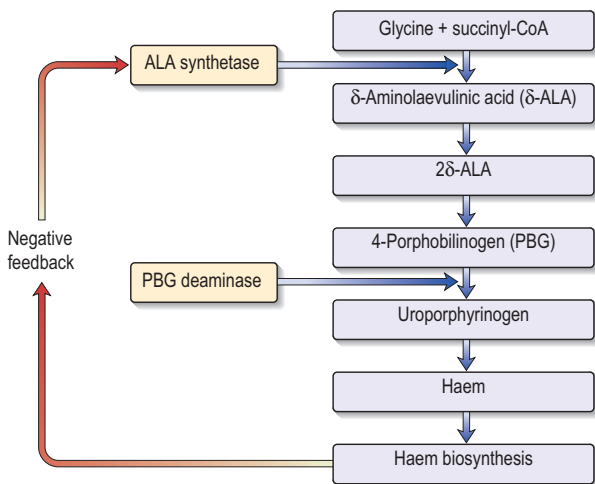
The porphyrias form a rare heterogeneous group of inherited disorders of haem synthesis. This leads to an overproduction of the intermediate compounds called porphyrins (Fig. 15.3). In porphyrias the excess production of porphyrins occurs within the liver (hepatic porphyria) or in the bone marrow (erythropoietic porphyria), but porphyrias can also be classified in terms of clinical presentation as acute or non-acute (Table 15.13). Acute porphyrias usually produce neuropsychiatric problems and are associated with excess production and urinary excretion of  $\delta$ -aminolaevulinic acid ( $\delta$ -ALA) and porphobilinogen. These metabolites are not increased in the non-acute porphyrias.

### Acute intermittent porphyria

This is an autosomal dominant disorder caused by a defect at the level of porphobilinogen deaminase. It is the commonest of the acute porphyrias. Presentation is in early adult life, and women are affected more than men.

### Clinical features

Abdominal pain, vomiting and constipation are the most common presenting features, occurring in 90% of patients (mimicking an acute abdomen, especially as there may be fever and leucocytosis). Additional features include polyneuropathy (especially motor), hypertension, tachycardia and neuropsychiatric disorder (fits, depression, anxiety and frank psychosis). The



**Fig. 15.3** Pathways in porphyrin metabolism.

**Table 15.13** The classification of the porphyrias

|           | Hepatic                      | Erythropoietic                |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Acute     | Acute intermittent porphyria |                               |
|           | Variegate porphyria          |                               |
|           | Hereditary coproporphyria    |                               |
| Non-acute | Porphyria cutanea tarda      | Congenital porphyria          |
|           |                              | Erythropoietic protoporphyria |

urine may turn red or brown on standing. Attacks may be precipitated by alcohol and a variety of drugs, especially those such as barbiturates, which are enzyme-inducing drugs and increase  $\delta$ -ALA synthetase activity.

## Investigations

During an attack there may be a neutrophil leucocytosis, abnormal liver biochemistry and a raised urea.

The diagnosis is made during an attack by demonstrating increased urinary excretion of porphobilinogen. Erythrocyte porphobilinogen deaminase may be measured between attacks or, in some cases, urinary porphobilinogen remains high.

## Management

Abdominal pain is severe and may require opiate analgesia. A high carbohydrate intake (oral or intravenous glucose) must be maintained because this depresses  $\delta$ -ALA synthetase activity. Haem arginate is a stable preparation of haem and is given intravenously during an acute attack. Haem inhibits ALA synthetase (Fig. 15.2) and hence reduces levels of the intermediate precursors.

### Other porphyrias

Porphyria cutanea tarda (PCT) has both sporadic and inherited forms (autosomal dominant) that are indistinguishable clinically. It presents with a bullous skin eruption on exposure to light or minor trauma. The eruption heals with scarring. Many patients with sporadic PCT have underlying chronic liver disease (particularly due to alcohol or hepatitis C infection).

Variagate porphyria and hereditary coproporphyria present with features similar to those of acute intermittent porphyria, together with the cutaneous features of PCT.

The erythropoietic porphyrias are very rare and present with photosensitive skin lesions.

## AMYLOIDOSIS

This is a heterogeneous group of disorders characterized by extracellular deposition of an insoluble fibrillar protein called amyloid. Amyloidosis is acquired or hereditary, and may be localized or systemic. Clinical features are the result of amyloid deposits affecting the normal structure and function of the affected tissue. The diagnosis of amyloidosis is usually made with Congo red staining of a biopsy of affected tissues. In systemic amyloid a simple rectal biopsy may be used for histological diagnosis. Amyloid deposits stain red and show green fluorescence in polarized light. Scintigraphy using  $^{123}\text{I}$ -labelled serum amyloid P component is being increasingly employed for assessment.

The features of some systemic amyloid types are shown in Table 15.14.

Localized amyloid deposits occur in the brain of patients with Alzheimer's disease and in the joints of patients on long-term dialysis.

## THERAPEUTICS

### Oral antidiabetic drugs

#### Metformin

#### Mechanism of action

Activates AMP-kinase, which is involved in metabolism of the membrane glucose transporter, GLUT4, and fatty acid oxidation. Increases glucose

**Table 15.14** Classification of the more common types of amyloid and amyloidosis

| Type            | Fibril protein precursor  | Clinical syndrome   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| AL              | Monoclonal immunoglobulin light chains                              | Associated with myeloma, Waldenström's macroglobulinaemia and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Presents with cardiac failure, nephrotic syndrome, carpal tunnel syndrome and macroglossia (large tongue) |
| ATTR (familial) | Abnormal transthyretin (plasma carrier protein)                     | Neuropathy and cardiomyopathy   |
| AA              | Protein A, a precursor of serum amyloid A (an acute-phase reactant) | Occurs with chronic infections (e.g. TB), inflammation (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis) and malignancy (e.g. Hodgkin's disease). Presents with proteinuria and hepatosplenomegaly                  |

transport into cells, decreases hepatic gluconeogenesis and increases insulin sensitivity.

## Indications

Drug of first choice in overweight patients in whom strict dieting has failed to control diabetes. Also used in combination with sulphonylureas, pioglitazone, repaglinide, nateglinide or insulin if diabetes is inadequately controlled with metformin alone. Also improves fertility and weight reduction in patients with polycystic ovary syndrome.

## Preparations and dose

**Metformin** *Tablets: 500 mg, 850 mg.*

500 mg once daily initially, then titrate upwards in weekly increments to three times a day with meals, or 850 mg every 12 hours; maximum 3 g daily in divided doses.

## Side-effects

Anorexia, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea (usually transient), abdominal pain, metallic taste, rarely type B (non-hypoxic) lactic acidosis (mortality of 30–50%), B<sub>12</sub> deficiency (decreased absorption). Hypoglycaemia does not usually occur with metformin.



## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in severe renal impairment (eGFR < 30 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>) because of increased risk of lactic acidosis. Withdraw if tissue hypoxia likely (e.g. sepsis, respiratory failure, recent myocardial infarction, hepatic impairment), use of iodine-containing X-ray contrast media (do not restart until renal function returns to normal) and use of general anaesthesia (suspend metformin 2 days before surgery and restart when renal function returns to normal).

## Sulphonylureas

### Mechanism of action

Augment insulin secretion.

### Indications

Patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus who are not overweight, or in whom metformin is contraindicated or not tolerated.

### Preparations and dose

Several sulphonylureas are available and choice is determined by side-effects and the duration of action as well as the patient's age and renal function. Glibenclamide is long acting and associated with a greater risk of hypoglycaemia and should be avoided in the elderly. Gliclazide and tolbutamide are shorter acting and are a better choice.

**Glibenclamide** *Tablets: 2.5 mg, 5 mg.*

Initially 5 mg daily with or immediately after breakfast, adjusted according to response; maximum 15 mg daily.

**Tolbutamide** *Tablets: 500 mg.*

0.5–1.5 g (max. 2g) daily in divided doses with or immediately after breakfast.

**Gliclazide** *Tablets: 80 mg.*

Initially 40–80 mg daily, adjusted according to response up to 160 mg as a single dose or 320 mg daily in divided doses.

### Side-effects

Generally mild and infrequent and include gastrointestinal disturbances such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and constipation. May encourage weight gain. Sulphonylurea-induced hypoglycaemia may persist for many hours and must always be treated in hospital. Occasionally cholestatic jaundice, hepatitis, allergic skin reactions and blood disorders.

## Cautions/contraindications

Use short-acting form in renal impairment. Avoid sulphonylureas in severe renal and hepatic impairment, and in porphyria. Contraindicated in breast feeding, and substitute insulin during pregnancy.

## Treatment of hypoglycaemia

Initially glucose 10–20 g (2–4 teaspoons sugar, 3–6 sugar lumps, 50–100 mL fizzy drink) is given by mouth. If sugar cannot be given by mouth (e.g. unconscious patient), glucose or glucagon can be given by injection.

## Mechanism of action

Glucagon mobilizes glycogen stored in the liver.

## Indications

Acute hypoglycaemia where glucose cannot be given either by mouth or intravenously.

## Preparations and dose

**Glucagon GlucaGen® Hypokit** 1 mg vial with prefilled syringe containing water for injection.

By subcutaneous, intramuscular, or intravenous injection 1 mg.

## Side-effects

Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, hypokalaemia, hypotension, hypersensitivity reactions.

## Cautions/contraindications

Phaeochromocytoma.

## Lipid-lowering drugs

### Statins

#### Mechanism of action

Inhibition of 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl coenzyme A (HMG-CoA) reductase, the rate limiting enzyme involved in cholesterol synthesis. More effective at lowering LDL-cholesterol than other classes of drugs but less effective than the fibrates in reducing triglycerides.

#### Indications

*Secondary prevention* of coronary and cardiovascular events in patients with history of angina or myocardial infarction, peripheral artery disease,

non-haemorrhagic stroke, transient ischaemic attack. *Primary prevention* of coronary events in patients at increased risk of coronary heart disease such as inherited dyslipidaemias or a 10-year cardiovascular risk of 20% or more calculated using tables such as the Joint British Societies Coronary Risk Prediction Chart in the *British National Formulary*.

## Preparations and dose

**Atorvastatin** *Lipitor*® tablets: 10 mg, 20 mg, 40 mg, 80 mg.

10 mg once daily at night increased at intervals of at least 4 weeks to 40 mg once daily. Maximum 80 mg daily.

**Simvastatin** Tablets: 10 mg, 20 mg, 40 mg, 80 mg.

10 mg at night, increased at intervals of at least 4 weeks up to 80 mg at night.

## Side-effects

Reversible myositis/myopathy – ask patients to report unexplained muscle pain, measure serum creatine kinase (CK) and stop statin if CK  $>5 \times$  upper limit of normal. Diagnose rhabdomyolysis if CK  $>10 \times$  upper limit of normal. In this case check serum creatinine (may be acute kidney injury) and urine myoglobin. Altered liver biochemistry – liver biochemistry should be measured before and within 3 months and at 12 months of starting treatment, unless indicated sooner by signs or symptoms suggestive of hepatotoxicity. Stop treatment if serum transaminase concentration persistently raised to 3 times the upper limit of the reference range. Gastrointestinal effects including abdominal pain, diarrhoea, flatulence and vomiting.

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in acute liver disease (acute viral hepatitis, alcoholic hepatitis) pregnancy (adequate contraception during treatment and for 1 month afterwards), breast feeding and personal or family history of muscle disorders. Increased risk of myositis and rhabdomyolysis if statins are given with a fibrate, ezetimibe, ciclosporin, digoxin, warfarin, erythromycin and ketoconazole.

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# The special senses

Some disorders of the eye, ear, nose and throat will be discussed in this chapter. Many conditions will be managed in specialized clinics, and the purpose of this chapter is to describe common conditions or those which need an urgent referral for further specialist management.

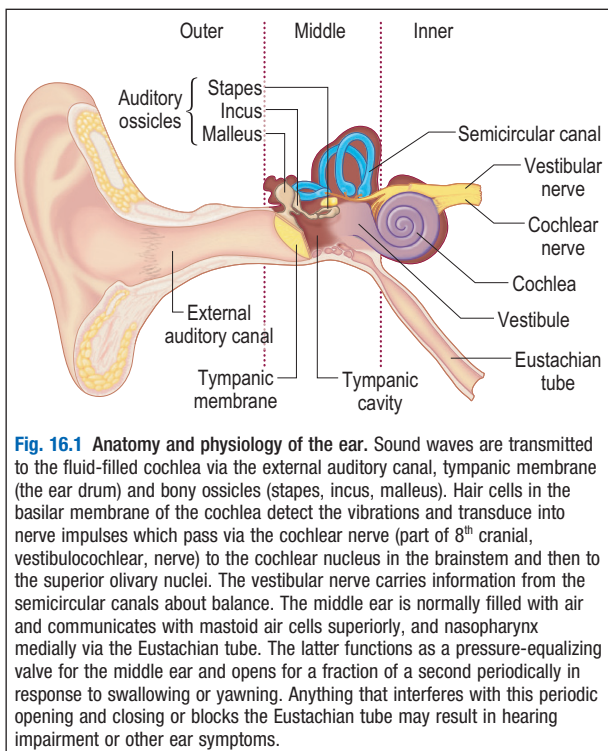
## THE EAR

The anatomy and physiology of the ear are summarized in Figure 16.1.

## Hearing loss

Hearing loss is a common problem that affects many people, at least on a temporary basis. Short-lived hearing loss occurs when flying or during an ear infection. In contrast, permanent sensorineural hearing loss often occurs with ageing. Deafness can be conductive or sensorineural, and these are differentiated at the bedside by the Rinne and the Weber tests (see below). Conductive hearing loss is due to an abnormality of the outer or middle ear. The outer ear is examined with an auroscope which may show wax or a foreign body in the external canal or abnormalities of the tympanic membrane such as perforation or loss of the normal light reflex. Sensorineural hearing loss is due to a disorder of the inner ear, cochlea, or the cochlear nerve (Table 16.1).

An ear that hears normally should have air conduction that is louder than bone conduction. The Rinne test allows comparison of sound when a vibrating tuning fork, 512 Hz, is placed on the mastoid bone behind the ear (bone conduction) versus when the tuning fork is held next to the ear (air conduction). The Rinne test is normal (positive) when the tuning fork is louder if held next to the ear compared to being placed on the mastoid bone. The opposite is the case in a negative test. The Weber test is performed by placing the handle of the vibrating tuning fork on the bridge of the nose and asking the patient if the sound is louder in one ear or the other. The sound is heard equally in patients with normal hearing or with symmetrical hearing loss.



**Fig. 16.1** Anatomy and physiology of the ear. Sound waves are transmitted to the fluid-filled cochlea via the external auditory canal, tympanic membrane (the ear drum) and bony ossicles (stapes, incus, malleus). Hair cells in the basilar membrane of the cochlea detect the vibrations and transduce into nerve impulses which pass via the cochlear nerve (part of 8<sup>th</sup> cranial, vestibulocochlear, nerve) to the cochlear nucleus in the brainstem and then to the superior olivary nuclei. The vestibular nerve carries information from the semicircular canals about balance. The middle ear is normally filled with air and communicates with mastoid air cells superiorly, and nasopharynx medially via the Eustachian tube. The latter functions as a pressure-equalizing valve for the middle ear and opens for a fraction of a second periodically in response to swallowing or yawning. Anything that interferes with this periodic opening and closing or blocks the Eustachian tube may result in hearing impairment or other ear symptoms.

## Vertigo

The vestibular apparatus in the inner ear comprises two components: the semicircular canals, which indicate rotational movements and the otoliths (utricle and saccule) which sense linear acceleration. These organs provide information to the brainstem (via the vestibular part of 8<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve) and cerebellum regarding the static head position and turning of the head. Vertigo is an illusion of movement, i.e. that everything is spinning or moving, and can arise from peripheral lesions (disorders of the vestibular apparatus or vestibular nerve) or central lesions (of the brainstem or cerebellum).

**Benign paroxysmal positional vertigo** accounts for about half of cases with peripheral vestibular dysfunction. Calcium debris in one of the semicircular canals leads to recurrent episodes of vertigo lasting seconds to minutes. Episodes are provoked by specific types of head movements, e.g. turning in bed or sitting up. There is no serious underlying cause and the condition may resolve spontaneously.

**Table 16.1** Causes of deafness

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Conductive</b>                                  | <b>Sensorineural</b>                                |
| <i>Rinne negative</i>                              | <i>Rinne positive</i>                               |
| <i>Weber – sound heard louder on affected side</i> | <i>Weber – sound heard louder in the normal ear</i> |
| <b>Congenital – atresia</b>                        | <b>End organ</b>                                    |
|  | Advancing age                                       |
| <b>External auditory canal</b>                     | Occupational acoustic trauma                        |
| Wax  | Ménière's disease                                   |
| Foreign body                                       | Drugs (gentamycin, furosemide)                      |
| Otitis externa                                     | <b>Eighth nerve lesions</b>                         |
| Chronic suppuration                                | Acoustic neuroma                                    |
| <b>Ear drum</b>                                    | Cranial trauma                                      |
| Perforation/trauma                                 | Inflammatory lesions:                               |
| <b>Middle ear</b>                                  | tuberculous meningitis                              |
| Otosclerosis                                       | sarcoidosis   |
| Disorder of bony ossicles                          | neurosyphilis                                       |
| Otitis media                                       | carcinomatous meningitis                            |
|  | <b>Brainstem lesions (rare)</b>                     |
|  | Multiple sclerosis                                  |
|  | Infarction  |

**Vestibular neuronitis** is believed to be caused by a viral infection affecting the labyrinth. There is a sudden onset of severe vertigo, nystagmus and vomiting, but no deafness. The attack lasts several days or weeks, and treatment is symptomatic with vestibular sedatives (e.g. prochlorperazine).

**Ménière's disease** is due to a build-up of endolymphatic fluid in the inner ear. It is characterized by recurrent episodes of vertigo lasting 30 minutes to a few hours. It is associated with a sensation of ear fullness, sensorineural hearing loss, tinnitus and vomiting. Treatment involves the use of vestibular sedatives, e.g. cinnarizine in the acute phase, low-salt diet, betahistine, and avoidance of caffeine.

**Central causes** of vertigo are often vascular and may also be due to multiple sclerosis or drug-induced (e.g. anticonvulsants, alcohol or hypnotics).

## Ear infections

Otitis externa is a diffuse infection (bacterial, viral or fungal) of the skin of the ear canal. There is severe pain and on examination debris in the ear canal sometimes with swelling. Treatment is with regular cleansing, topical

antibiotics and corticosteroids. Otitis media is inflammation of the middle ear, usually due to a viral infection. There is severe pain, conductive hearing loss and a mucous discharge if the eardrum is perforated. Antibiotic treatment, amoxicillin 1 g every 8 hours for 5 days, is indicated if there are systemic features or if symptoms do not settle within 72 hours. Swelling and tenderness over the mastoid bone indicate mastoiditis and is an indication for an urgent ENT opinion.

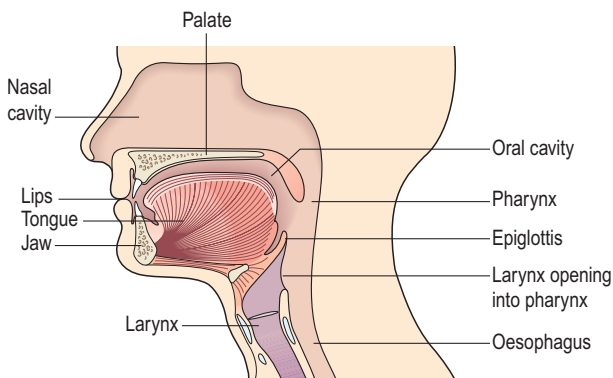
## THE NOSE AND NASAL CAVITY

The nasal cavity is continuous with the nose in front and the pharynx posteriorly and is divided by a midline septum formed of bone and cartilage (Fig. 16.2). The walls of the nasal cavity are formed by the maxilla (laterally), nasal bone (roof) and roof of the mouth (floor). Paranasal sinuses (frontal, ethmoidal, sphenoid, maxillary) connect to the nasal cavity via small passageways called ostia. The nasal cavity receives a rich blood supply derived from branches of the internal and external carotid arteries, which anastomose on the anterior nasal septum (Little's area).

The functions of the nose are to facilitate:

- Smell via the olfactory epithelium in the roof on the nose and the first cranial nerve
- Respiration by moistening, warming and filtering inspired air.

Common conditions of the nose are epistaxis, nasal obstruction, rhinitis (p. 513), sinusitis and nasal fracture.



**Fig. 16.2** The nasal cavity.



## Epistaxis (nose bleeds)

Local (trauma, nasal fractures, surgery, intranasal steroids, tumours of the nose, paranasal sinuses or nasopharynx) and systemic causes (anticoagulants, bleeding disorders, hypertension or familial haemorrhagic telangiectasia) contribute to epistaxis. Little's area is the commonest site for bleeding. Routine blood tests (full blood count, coagulation screen, cross-match) and an intravenous cannula with fluids are indicated in the presence of major bleeding (a minority of patients) or if a coagulopathy is suspected. Initial treatment in stable patients is leaning the patient forward and compression of the soft nose tissues against the septum for at least 10 minutes. Topical application of vasoconstrictors (adrenaline (epinephrine) 1:10 000) may be needed to control bleeding and localize the source prior to electrical or chemical cautery of the bleeding vessel. If this fails the nose is packed with pre-fabricated nasal sponges or an epistaxis balloon. Posterior nasal haemorrhage is often more severe and requires hospital admission after packing with input from the specialist team (ear, nose and throat).

## Sinusitis

Infection of the paranasal sinuses may complicate allergic rhinitis or an upper respiratory tract infection (caused by mucosal oedema and blockage of the ostium) and are usually caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* or *Haemophilus influenzae*. Symptoms are frontal headache, facial pain and tenderness, and nasal discharge. Diagnosis is clinical and treatment is with broad-spectrum antibiotics (e.g. co-amoxiclav), topical corticosteroids (e.g. fluticasone propionate nasal spray to reduce mucosal swelling) and steam inhalations. Rare complications include local and cerebral abscess formation. Indications for imaging of the sinuses with CT or MRI are suspected abscess, recurrent acute (>4 episodes per year) or chronic sinusitis (symptoms >3 months).

## THE THROAT

### Hoarseness (dysphonia)

Most cases of a hoarse voice are due to laryngeal pathology and include inflammation of the vocal cords, nodules on the vocal cords and Reinke's oedema. The latter is due to a collection of tissue fluid in the subepithelial layer of the vocal cord associated with irritation of the cords due to smoking, voice abuse, acid reflux or rarely hypothyroidism. Acute onset of hoarseness, particularly in a smoker, is an indication for urgent referral to an ENT surgeon. It can be due to a paralysed left vocal cord secondary to mediastinal disease, e.g. bronchial carcinoma or carcinoma of the larynx.

## Stridor

Stridor or noisy breathing can be divided into inspiratory (generated by collapse of the extrathoracic airway during inspiration) or expiratory (intra-thoracic trachea or below) noise. It is a medical emergency and the help of an ENT surgeon and senior anaesthetist may be needed urgently. The causes of stridor include inhalation of a foreign body (may be sudden onset of inspiratory stridor), infections (epiglottitis, diphtheria, tonsillitis), tumour of the trachea or larynx, and trauma. If an infection is suspected, examination of the oropharynx should only be undertaken in an area where immediate intubation can take place. Severe stridor due to any cause may be an indication for either intubation or tracheostomy.

## Sore throat

Most sore throats are viral in origin and self limiting. Group A  $\beta$ -haemolytic streptococcus is the commonest bacterial cause. Antibiotic treatment, phenoxymethylpenicillin 500 mg every 6 hours for 10 days, is given if there is marked systemic upset, peritonsillar cellulitis or abscess, a history of valvular heart disease or if there is an increased risk of acute infection (immunosuppressed, cystic fibrosis). Respiratory difficulty or stridor is an indication for urgent hospital admission. Infectious mononucleosis presents with a severe sore throat with exudate and anterior cervical lymphadenopathy (p. 20). Fungal infections, usually candidiasis, are uncommon and may indicate an immunocompromised patient or undiagnosed diabetic.

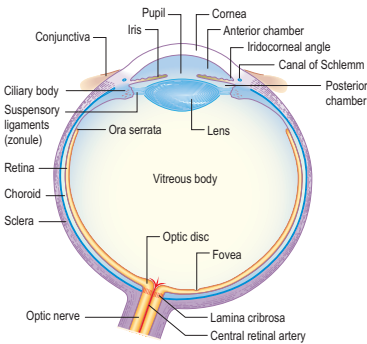
## THE EYE

The anatomy and physiology of the eye is summarized in Figure 16.3.

### The red eye

Many patients with a red eye will have simple benign conditions (Table 16.2). However, other conditions can rapidly lead to loss of vision which may be permanent and these patients must be referred urgently (i.e. same-day) to a specialist (Table 16.3). Slit lamp examination and measurement of intraocular pressures will often be performed under specialist care after onward referral. The management of a patient presenting with a red eye and a history of trauma or foreign body hitting the eye is beyond the scope of this chapter and is not discussed further.

Conjunctivitis does not usually need referral for a specialist opinion unless the symptoms continue for more than 2 weeks or the eye becomes painful or vision decreases. Bacterial conjunctivitis is treated with a topical broad-spectrum antibiotic such as chloramphenicol. Conjunctival swabs for Gram stain should be taken if there is no response to treatment or in suspected



**Sclera** – thick protective membrane forming outer coat of eyeball (the white of the eye).

**Cornea** – transparent dome-shaped anterior portion of outer covering of eye, continuous with sclera. Provides most of eye's refractive power.

**Conjunctiva** – richly vascularized mucous membrane covering anterior surface of sclera and reflected onto undersurface of upper and lower eyelids. **Anterior chamber** – contains aqueous humor (produced by ciliary body and drained via canal of Schlemm) providing nutrients and oxygen to cornea.

**Iris** – coloured part of eye, muscles regulate size of pupil and thus control amount of light entering eye. **Lens** – transparent biconvex structure. Changes shape to alter refractive power of the eye. **Retina** – contains two types of photoreceptors, rods and cones. The cones provide the eye's colour vision and are mainly confined to the central yellow spot known as the *macula*. In the centre of that region is the *fovea*.

**Fig. 16.3** Anatomy and physiology of the eye.

gonococcal conjunctivitis (rapid onset of symptoms, copious discharge, chemosis, and lid oedema). Viral conjunctivitis is usually self-limiting. The patient is highly contagious while the eye is red; strict hygiene and keeping towels separate from other family members is necessary to reduce the chance of transmission.

## Visual loss

Every patient with unexplained visual loss requires ophthalmic referral. The history will determine if the visual loss is transient or persistent. Temporary blurring in one or both eyes or seeing 'zig-zag' lines is most commonly due to migraine (p. 774). However, these symptoms can also occur with cerebral vascular lesions or tumours and should not automatically be attributed to migraine unless there is a history of typical migraine headache or the patient is under 50 years and has no other neurological symptoms or signs. Severe temporary visual loss (amaurosis fugax) is due to a transient lack of blood supply to the retina or visual cortex and may occur with a transient ischaemic attack (p. 744) or temporal arteritis (p. 777). Urgent assessment and treatment is necessary as amaurosis fugax is a warning sign of impending blindness or stroke. Rarely, papilloedema due to raised intracranial pressure can cause transient (lasting seconds) loss of vision in one or both eyes.

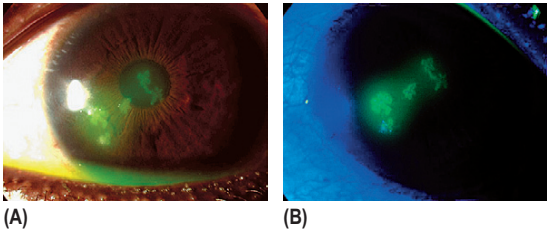
All causes of sudden severe visual loss are indications for urgent referral to an ophthalmologist (Table 16.4). Central retinal artery occlusion is an indication for very urgent referral to an ophthalmic centre (within 1 hour).

**Table 16.2** Causes of a red eye that do not need urgent referral

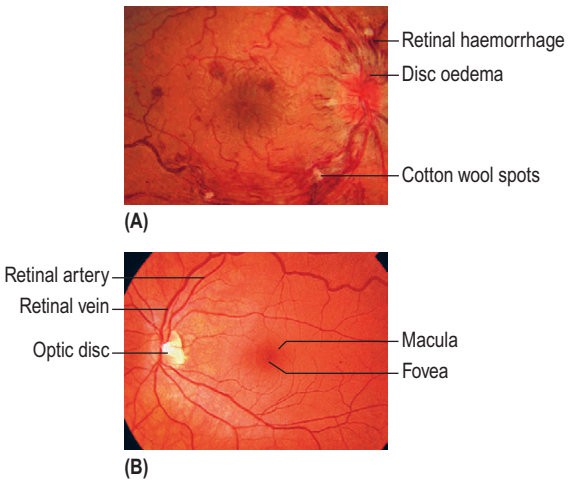
|                                    | <b>Causes</b>   | <b>History</b>   | <b>Acuity/pupil/cornea</b> | <b>Site of redness</b>  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Conjunctivitis</b>              | Bacterial, viral, allergic, chlamydial                    | Often bilateral. Itchy, gritty eye. Purulent discharge with bacterial infection              | Normal                     | Diffuse ('conjunctival') redness of ocular surface            |
| <b>Subconjunctival haemorrhage</b> | Blood between sclera and conjunctiva                      | May occur after eye rubbing, severe coughing, rarely hypertension or blood clotting disorder | Normal                     | Diffuse area of bright red blood under conjunctiva of one eye |
| <b>Episcleritis</b>                | Inflammation of episclera (thin membrane covering sclera) | Mild eye irritation and redness  | Normal                     | Diffuse or localized injection of conjunctiva                 |

**Table 16.3** Causes of a red eye requiring urgent (same day) referral to an ophthalmologist

|   | <b>Causes</b>  | <b>History</b>  | <b>Visual acuity</b> | <b>Site of redness</b>   | <b>Pupil</b>           | <b>Cornea</b>  |
|---|--|---|----------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| <b>Keratitis (corneal inflammation)</b> | Infections, autoimmune, exposure keratopathy, contact lens related               | Pain, foreign body sensation, blurred vision, photophobia   | Reduced              | Ciliary injection<br>– redness maximal around the edge of the cornea | Normal                 | Corneal ulceration.<br>More easily visible with fluorescein drops and a blue light (Fig. 16.4) |
| <b>Acute glaucoma</b>                   | Sudden severe rise in intraocular pressure due to reduced aqueous fluid drainage | Sudden onset of severe eye pain, blurred vision, rainbow-like 'haloes' around lights ± nausea, vomiting | Reduced              | Diffuse  | Fixed and semi-dilated | Cloudy   |
| <b>Anterior uveitis (iritis)</b>        | Autoimmune diseases, sometimes infectious  | Painful eye, blurred vision, photophobia  | Normal or reduced    | Ciliary injection  | Small and fixed        | Normal   |
| <b>Scleritis</b>                        | Often underlying vasculitis  | Mild to severe eye pain   | Normal or decreased  | Diffuse or localized   | Normal                 | Normal   |
| <b>Endophthalmitis</b>                  | Infection of the eyeball after eye surgery, injury or spread via the bloodstream | Blurred vision, painful eye, photophobia, 'floaters'  | Decreased            | Diffuse or localized   | Small and fixed        | Cloudy   |



**Fig. 16.4** Dendritic ulcers on the cornea. (A) Stained with fluorescein. (B) Stained with fluorescein and viewed with blue light.



**Fig. 16.5** (A) The fundus in central retinal vein occlusion compared with (B) the normal appearance of the fundus.

Acute uveitis, acute glaucoma and keratitis present with the combination of a red eye (see above) and sudden or rapidly progressive visual loss. The initial history and examination of a patient presenting with sudden loss of vision is summarized in Emergency Box 16.1.

Gradual visual loss includes slowly progressive optic atrophy, chronic glaucoma, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy (p. 681), macular degeneration and chronic retinal detachment. In developing countries trachoma due to *Chlamydia trachomatis* and onchocerciasis (river blindness) due to *Onchocerca volvulus* are also causes of visual loss.

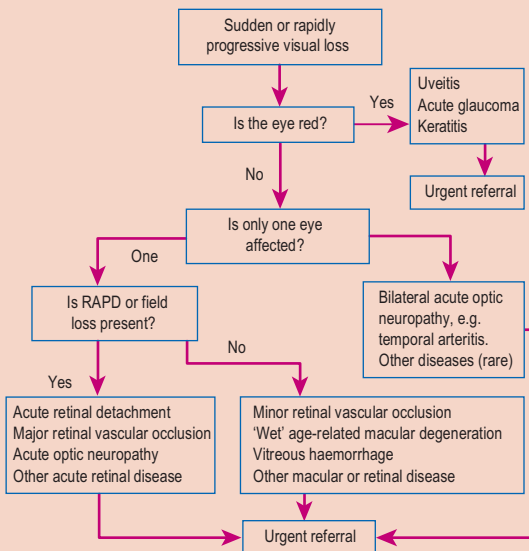
**Table 16.4** Causes of sudden or rapidly progressive visual loss

|   | <b>History</b>  | <b>Visual acuity</b>  | <b>Pupils</b>  | <b>Ophthalmoscopy</b>   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Acute retinal detachment</b>               | Flashing lights, floating spots (black or red), field loss (like a curtain coming in from the periphery)  | Usually decreased with a visual field defect  | Pupil in affected eye dilates in response to light rather than constricting (relative afferent pupillary defect, RAPD) | Abnormal red reflex. Detached retina looks grey and wrinkled. Normal examination does not exclude diagnosis   |
| <b>Retinal vein occlusion</b>                 | Sudden loss of vision in all (central vein) or part (branch of retinal vein) of visual field  | Decreased, with visual field defect   | RAPD if severe   | Retinal haemorrhages, tortuous dilated retinal veins, macular oedema, cotton wool spots (Fig. 16.5)   |
| <b>Retinal artery occlusion</b>               | Sudden painless loss of vision  | Markedly reduced  | RAPD   | Pale retina with central macular 'cherry red spot'  |
| <b>Acute optic neuropathy</b>                 | Rapidly progressive loss of vision; may be decreased colour vision. Symptoms of underlying disease (usually multiple sclerosis or nerve ischaemia due to atherosclerosis) | Decreased   | RAPD   | Normal or swollen optic disc  |
| <b>Vitreous haemorrhage</b>                   | Severe visual loss if a major bleed, floating blobs or spots if mild/moderate   | Normal or reduced   | No RAPD  | Decreased red reflex  |
| <b>'Wet' age-related macular degeneration</b> | Occurs in the elderly. Sudden distortion (straight lines seem curved, central blank patch of vision) or blurring of vision  | Decreased acuity with central scotoma (the macula lies in the centre of the retina and disease causes a central blank patch on field testing) | Usually no RAPD  | Macular oedema (swelling) and/or subretinal haemorrhages and hard exudates – due to abnormal new vessels under the macula leaking fluid or bleeding |



## Emergency Box 16.1

### The initial history and examination in the patient presenting with sudden loss of vision



RAPD, relative afferent pupillary defect

After Pane A, Simcock P (2005) *Practical Ophthalmology*. Edinburgh, Elsevier Churchill Livingstone.



# Neurology

## COMMON NEUROLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

### Headache

Headache is a common complaint and does not usually indicate serious disease. In most patients presenting with headache there are no abnormal physical signs and the diagnosis depends upon an accurate history. The causes of headache can be broadly divided according to their onset and subsequent course (Table 17.1). The underlying causes of acute or subacute onset of headache are all potentially serious and require urgent investigation and assessment. Subarachnoid haemorrhage presents with headache which reaches maximum intensity within seconds of onset and is described as the 'worst ever' (p. 750). Neck stiffness and a positive Kernig's sign indicate meningeal irritation, which usually occurs because of bacterial or viral meningitis, or subarachnoid haemorrhage. Fever may also occur with these conditions.

The history and physical examination are the keys to distinguishing serious from benign causes of headache in patients with chronic or recurrent headache; most are due to tension-type headache (p. 774) and do not require further investigation. Progressively worsening headaches, or chronic headaches that change in character, may be caused by raised intracranial pressure, e.g. due to a space-occupying lesion, and require brain imaging by CT scan or MRI. Other features which indicate a higher risk of serious pathology and are indications for imaging are listed in Table 17.2. Headache with generalized aches and pains in the elderly suggests giant cell arteritis which requires urgent treatment with steroids to prevent blindness (p. 777).

### Dizziness, faints and 'funny turns'

Episodes of transient disturbance of consciousness are common clinical problems (Table 17.3). Differentiation of seizures from other disorders often depends entirely on the medical history. An eye-witness account is

**Table 17.1** Causes of headache**Acute severe (onset in minutes or hours)**

Intracranial haemorrhage  
 Cerebral venous thrombosis  
 Dissection of carotid/vertebrobasilar arteries  
 Meningitis  
 Head injury  
 Migraine  
 Drugs, e.g. glyceryl trinitrate  
 Alcohol  
 Infections, e.g. malaria

**Subacute onset (onset in days to weeks)**

Intracranial mass lesion  
 Encephalitis  
 Meningitis  
 Giant cell arteritis  
 Sinusitis  
 Acute glaucoma  
 Malignant hypertension

**Recurrent/chronic**

Migraine  
 Tension headache  
 Sinusitis  
 Cluster headaches  
 Paroxysmal hemicrania  
 Medication overuse  
 Intracranial mass lesion

**Table 17.2** Indications for brain imaging in patients with headache

Sudden onset  
 New headache in a patient over 50 years of age  
 Abnormal neurological signs  
 Headache changing with posture (may indicate raised ICP)  
 Headache made worse by coughing, sneezing, bending, straining (may indicate raised ICP)  
 Fever  
 History of HIV  
 History of cancer

*ICP, intracranial pressure*

**Table 17.3** Common causes of attacks of altered consciousness and falls in adults

|  |
|--|
| <p>Syncope – cardiopulmonary causes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Underlying structural cardiopulmonary disease, e.g. aortic stenosis, PE</li> <li>Arrhythmias</li> </ul> <p>Syncope – vascular causes</p> <p>Reflex: vasovagal (simple faint)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carotid sinus hypersensitivity</li> <li>Situational: cough, micturition, postexertional</li> <li>Postural (orthostatic) hypotension: autonomic failure, volume depletion</li> </ul> <p>Epilepsy</p> <p>Hypoglycaemia</p> <p>Psychogenic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panic attacks</li> <li>Hyperventilation</li> <li>Narcolepsy and cataplexy</li> </ul> |
|--|

PE, pulmonary embolism

invaluable. Differentiation must also be made from *narcolepsy*, a rare disorder characterized by periods of irresistible sleep in inappropriate circumstances and *cataplexy*, a related condition in which sudden loss of tone develops in the lower limbs, with preservation of consciousness. Attacks are set off by sudden surprise or emotion.

### Dizziness and syncope

*Syncope* describes a short duration (usually 20–30 seconds) of loss of consciousness caused by a global reduction in cerebral blood flow. There is usually a rapid and complete recovery. Syncope is a symptom rather than a disease. It can be caused by several underlying conditions (Table 17.3) and is often mistaken for epilepsy.

*Dizziness* or faintness precedes syncope, and represents an incomplete form in which cerebral perfusion has not fallen sufficiently to cause loss of consciousness. Dizziness should be differentiated from *vertigo* (p. 704), which is an illusion of rotary movement where the patient feels that the surroundings are spinning. It results from disease of the inner ear, the eighth cranial nerve, or its central connections.

The most frequent cause of dizziness is vasovagal syncope (a simple faint), which occurs as a result of reflex bradycardia and peripheral and splanchnic vasodilatation. Fear, pain and prolonged standing are the principal causes. Fainting almost never occurs in the recumbent position. A prodrome of nausea, pallor, lightheadedness and sweating usually precede a faint. Rapid recovery from the attack and the absence of jerking movements suggest a faint as opposed to a fit. Urinary incontinence may occur during syncope.

Loss of consciousness due to an arrhythmia occurs without warning and may occur in the supine position. Syncope may occur after micturition in men (particularly at night), and when the venous return to the heart is obstructed by breath-holding and severe coughing. Effort syncope occurs on exercise and occurs in patients with aortic stenosis and hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. Carotid sinus syncope is thought to be the result of excessive sensitivity of the sinus to external pressure. It occurs in elderly patients who lose consciousness following pressure on the sinus (e.g. turning the head). Postural hypotension (drop in systolic BP  $\geq 20$  mm Hg from lying to standing position after 3 minutes) occurs on standing in those with impaired autonomic reflexes, e.g. elderly people, in autonomic neuropathy and with some drugs (phenothiazines, tricyclic anti-depressants).

## Investigation

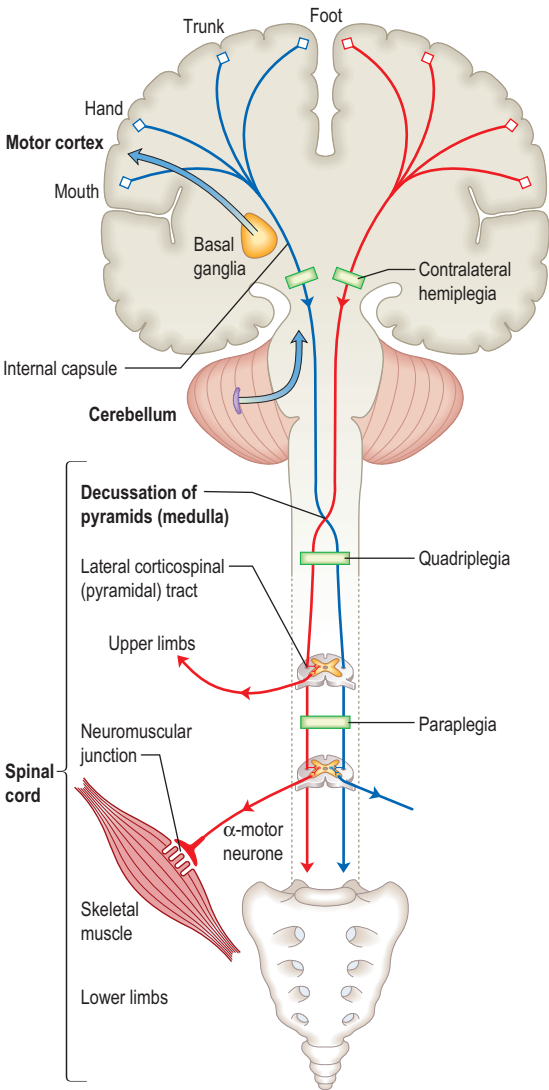
The history and physical examination together with lying and standing blood pressure and a 12 lead ECG will provide a diagnosis in most people with transient loss of consciousness. Echocardiography is used to determine any underlying structural heart disease. Ambulatory electrography (p. 415) has a low diagnostic yield unless symptoms are frequent. Tilt table testing (p. 417) is performed to investigate patients with unexplained syncope in whom cardiac causes or epilepsy have been excluded. Blood pressure, heart rate, symptoms and ECG are recorded after head-up tilt for 10–60 minutes. Reproduction of symptoms and hypotension indicate a positive test.

## Weakness

Skeletal muscle contraction is controlled by the motor axis of the central nervous system (Fig 17.1). Muscle weakness occurs due to a defect or damage in one or more components of this system, i.e. the motor cortex, corticospinal tracts, anterior horn cells, spinal nerve roots, peripheral nerves, the neuro-muscular junction and muscle fibres. It is necessary to determine whether there is true weakness rather than 'tiredness' or 'slowness', as in Parkinson's disease. The site of the lesion causing true muscle weakness is often identifiable from a detailed neurological examination. The distribution of weakness, the presence or absence of deep tendon reflexes, the plantar response (Table 17.4) and related sensory defects are all helpful in localizing the lesion in the nervous system. Lesions that affect the upper motor neurone and peripheral nerve will also often involve the sensory system because of the proximity of sensory to motor nerves in these areas.

## The corticospinal tracts

**The upper motor neurone** The corticospinal tracts originate from neurones of the motor cortex and terminate on the motor nuclei of the cranial nerves and the anterior spinal horn cells. The pathways cross over in the medulla and pass to the contralateral halves of the spinal cord as the crossed lateral



**Fig. 17.1** The crossed corticospinal ('pyramidal') tracts showing cortical representation of various parts of the body.

**Table 17.4** Comparison of the clinical features of upper and lower motor neurone lesions

| Upper motor neurone lesion*  | Lower motor neurone lesion               |
|--|--|
| Signs are on the opposite side to the lesion   | Signs are on the same side as the lesion |
| Fasciculation absent   | Fasciculation present                    |
| No muscle wasting  | Wasting                                  |
| Spasticity $\pm$ clonus  | Hypotonia                                |
| Weakness predominantly extensors in the arms, flexors in the legs                                    |  |
| Exaggerated tendon reflexes  | Loss of tendon reflexes                  |
| Extensor plantar response  |  |
| Drift of the outstretched hand (downwards, medially with a tendency to pronate)                      |  |
| <i>Fasciculation = visible contraction of single motor units, appearing as a twitch</i>              |  |
| <i>*Acute injury to the UMN is, however, manifest by transient flaccid weakness and hyporeflexia</i> |  |

corticospinal tracts (Fig. 17.1), which then synapse with the anterior horn cells. This is known as the pyramidal system, disease of which results in upper motor neurone (UMN) lesions with characteristic clinical features (Table 17.4). Appropriate imaging studies of the central nervous system and spine such as MRI or CT scan will be necessary to identify the primary disease.

Two main patterns of clinical features occur in UMN disorders: hemiparesis and paraparesis:

- Hemiparesis means weakness of the limbs of one side, and is usually caused by a lesion within the brain or brainstem, e.g. a stroke.
- Paraparesis (weak legs) indicates bilateral damage to the corticospinal tracts and is most often caused by lesions in the spinal cord below T1 (p. 779). Tetraparesis (quadriplegic, weakness of the arms and legs) indicates high cervical cord damage, most commonly resulting from trauma. Cord lesions result in UMN signs below the lesion, LMN signs at the level of the lesion and unaffected muscles above the lesion.

**The lower motor neurone** The lower motor neurone (LMN) is the motor pathway from the anterior horn cell or cranial nerve via a peripheral nerve to the motor endplate. Physical signs (Table 17.4) follow rapidly if the LMN is interrupted at any point in its course. Muscle disease may give a similar clinical picture, but reflexes are usually preserved.

LMN lesions are most commonly caused by the following:

- Anterior horn cell lesions, e.g. motor neurone disease, poliomyelitis
- Spinal root lesions, e.g. cervical and lumbar disc lesions
- Peripheral nerve lesions, e.g. trauma, compression or polyneuropathy.

The commonest disease of the neuromuscular junction is myasthenia gravis, which characteristically produces weakness of skeletal muscle and is rarely associated with wasting. Myopathies are discussed on page 790. Weakness of the proximal muscles, e.g. quadriceps, is typically seen with the various myopathies. Elevation of plasma muscle enzymes such as creatine kinase is highly suggestive of muscle diseases. Muscle biopsy may be necessary to determine the precise form of myopathy.

## Numbness

### The sensory system

The peripheral nerves carry all the modalities of sensation from nerve endings to the dorsal root ganglia and thence to the cord. These then ascend to the thalamus and cerebral cortex in two principal pathways (Fig. 17.2):

- Posterior columns, which carry sensory modalities for vibration, joint position sense (proprioception), two-point discrimination and light touch. These fibres ascend uncrossed to the gracile and cuneate nuclei in the medulla. Axons from the second-order neurones cross the midline to form the medial lemniscus and pass to the thalamus.
- Spinothalamic tracts, which carry sensations of pain and temperature. These fibres synapse in the dorsal horn of the cord, cross the midline and ascend as the spinothalamic tracts to the thalamus.

Paraesthesiae (pins and needles), numbness and pain are the principal symptoms of lesions of the sensory pathways below the level of the thalamus. The quality and distribution of the symptoms may suggest the site of the lesion.

**Peripheral nerve lesions** Symptoms are felt in the distribution of the affected peripheral nerve, e.g. the ulnar or median nerve. Polyneuropathy is a subset of the peripheral nerve disorders characterized by bilateral symmetrical, distal sensory loss and burning (p. 787).

**Spinal root lesions** Symptoms are referred to the dermatome supplied by that root, often with a tingling discomfort in that dermatome (Fig. 17.3). This is in contrast to lesions of sensory tracts within the central nervous system, which characteristically present as general defects in an extremity rather than specific dermatome defects.

**Spinal cord lesions** Symptoms (e.g. loss of sensation) are usually evident below the level of the lesion. A lesion of the pain–temperature pathway (spinothalamic tract), whether within the brainstem or the spinal cord, will result in loss of pain–temperature sensation contralaterally, below the level

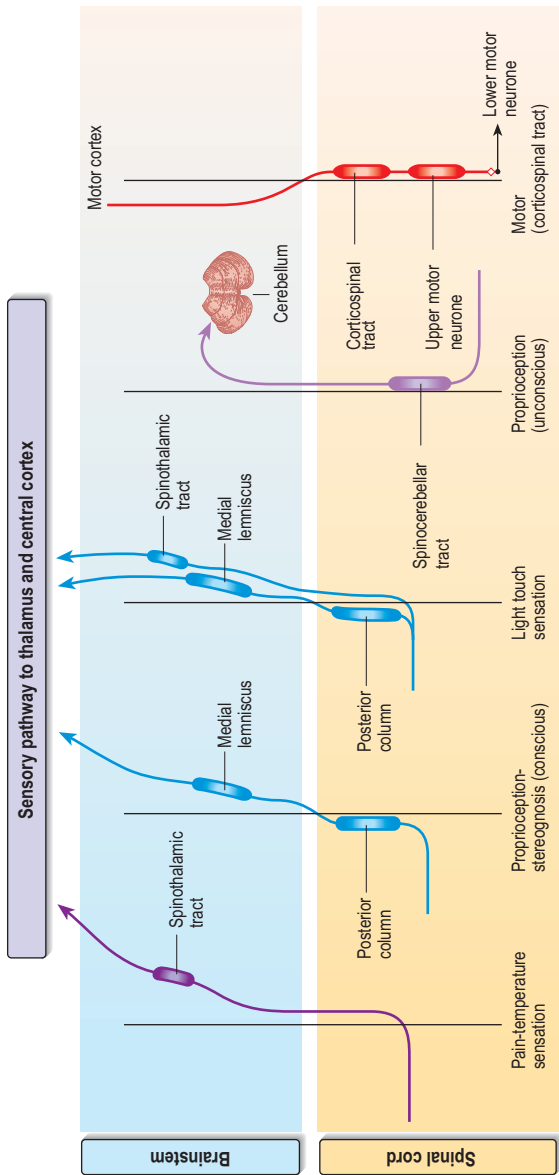
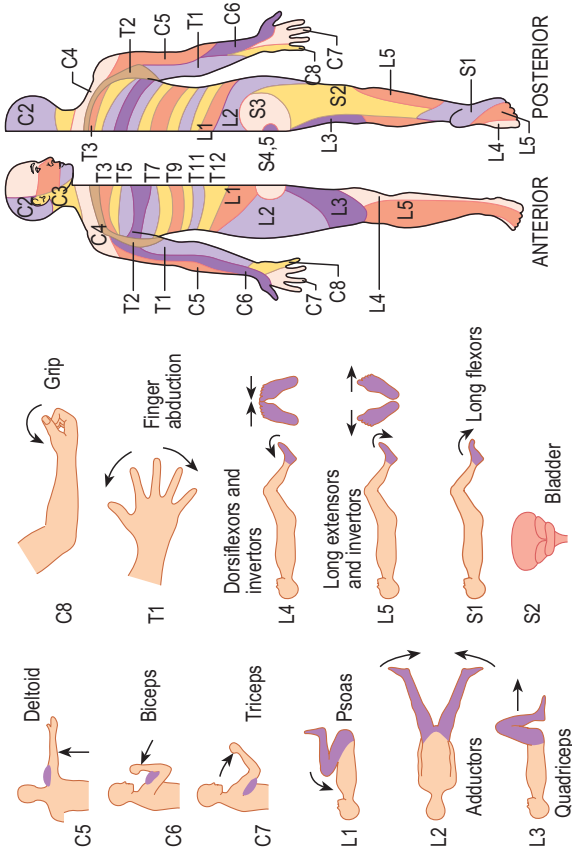


Fig. 17.2 A schematic outline of the major motor and sensory pathways.



| Reflexes        | Root values |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Ankle jerks     | S1          |
| Knee jerks      | L2, 3, 4    |
| Biceps jerks    | C5          |
| Supinator jerks | C6          |
| Triceps jerks   | C7          |
| Abdominals      | T8-11       |



**Fig. 17.3** Simple scheme depicting motor and sensory innervation of arms and legs and root values for reflexes. (Part of figure adapted from Parsons M (1993) *A Colour Atlas of Clinical Neurology*. London, Mosby Wolfe.)

of the lesion. A lesion at the spinal level of the pathway for proprioception will result in loss of these senses ipsilaterally below the level of the lesion. Dissociated sensory loss suggests a spinal cord lesion, for instance loss of pain–temperature sensation in the right leg and loss of proprioception in the left leg.

**Pontine lesions** The pons lies above the decussation of the posterior columns. As the medial lemniscus and spinothalamic tracts are close together, pontine lesions result in the loss of all forms of sensation on the side opposite the lesion.

**Thalamic lesions** A thalamic lesion is a rare cause of complete contralateral sensory loss. Spontaneous pain may also occur, most commonly as the result of a thalamic infarct.

**Cortical lesions** Sensory loss, neglect of one side of the body and subtle disorders of sensation may occur with lesions of the parietal cortex. Pain is not a feature of cortical lesions.

## Tremor

Tremor is a rhythmic involuntary muscular contraction characterized by oscillations of a part of the body. A *resting* tremor is seen in Parkinson's disease, parkinsonism and Wilson's disease. *Postural tremor* occurs when a patient attempts to maintain a posture such as holding the arms outstretched. Causes include physiological (due to any increase in sympathetic activity), essential tremor (p. 761), and in some cases of Parkinson's disease and cerebellar disease. *Intention tremor* occurs during voluntary movement and gets worse when approaching the target, e.g. during finger to nose testing, and occurs with cerebellar disease. *Task specific tremor* appears when performing goal-orientated tasks such as handwriting, speaking or standing. In many cases the cause of a tremor will be apparent from the history and examination. Investigations include thyroid function tests, testing for Wilson's disease (in anyone under 40 years) and brain imaging in selected cases.

## COORDINATION OF MOVEMENT

The extrapyramidal system (p. 758) and the cerebellum coordinate movement. Disorders of these systems will not produce muscular weakness but may produce incoordination.

### The cerebellum

Each lateral lobe of the cerebellum is responsible for coordinating movement of the ipsilateral limb. The midline vermis is concerned with maintenance of axial (midline) balance and posture. Causes of cerebellar lesions are listed in Table 17.5.

**Table 17.5** Some causes of cerebellar lesions

|  |
|--|
| Multiple sclerosis   |
| Space-occupying lesions<br>Primary tumour, e.g. medulloblastoma<br>Secondary tumour<br>Abscess |
| Haemorrhage  |
| Chronic alcohol use  |
| Antiepileptic drugs  |
| Paraneoplastic syndrome  |
| Spinocerebellar ataxia (rare, dominantly inherited)  |

A lesion within one cerebellar lobe causes one or all of the following:

- An ataxic gait with a broad base; the patient falters to the side of the lesion
- An 'intention tremor' (compare Parkinson's disease) with past-pointing
- Clumsy rapid alternating movements, e.g. tapping one hand on the back of the other (dysdiadochokinesia)
- Horizontal nystagmus with the fast component towards the side of the lesion (p. 736)
- Dysarthria, usually with bilateral lesions. The speech has a halting jerking quality – 'scanning speech'
- Titubation (rhythmic tremor of the head), hypotonia and depressed reflexes. There is no muscle weakness.

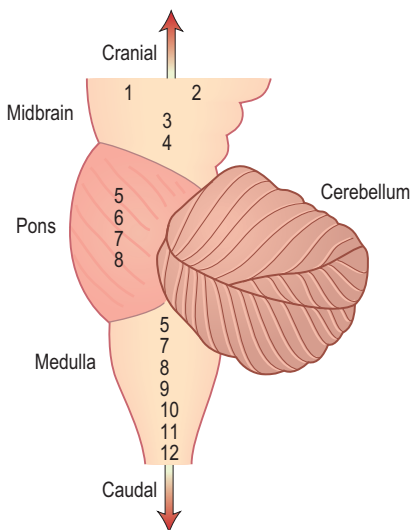
Lesions of the cerebellar vermis cause a characteristic ataxia of the trunk, so that the patient has difficulty sitting up or standing.

## THE CRANIAL NERVES

The 12 cranial nerves and their nuclei are distributed approximately equally between the three brainstem segments (Fig. 17.4). The exceptions are the first and second cranial nerves (nerves I and II), whose neurones project to the cerebral cortex. In addition, the sensory nucleus of nerve V extends from the midbrain to the spinal cord, and the nuclei of nerves VII and VIII lie not only in the pons but also in the medulla.

### The olfactory nerve (first cranial nerve)

The olfactory nerve subserves the sense of smell. The most common cause of anosmia (loss of the sense of smell) is simply nasal congestion. Neurological causes include tumours on the floor of the anterior fossa and head injury.



**Fig. 17.4** The location of the cranial nerves and their nuclei within the midbrain, pons and medulla as seen laterally.

## The optic nerve (second cranial nerve) and the visual system

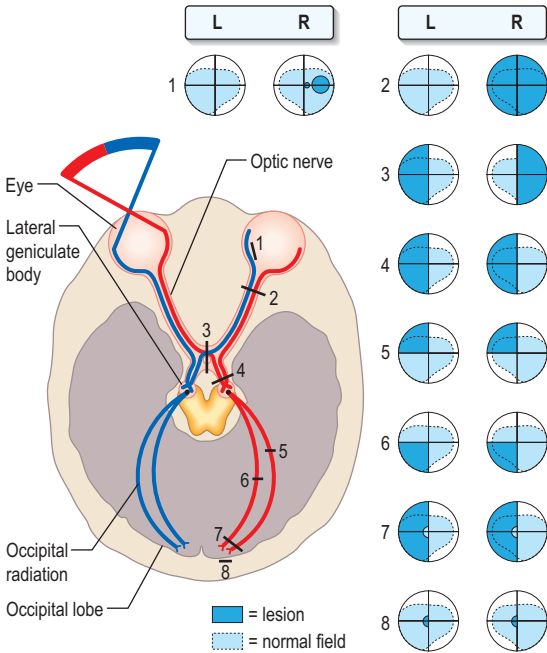
The optic nerves enter the cranial cavity through the optic foramina and unite to form the optic chiasm, beyond which they are continued as the optic tracts. Fibres of the optic tract project to the visual cortex (via the lateral geniculate body) and the third nerve nucleus for pupillary light reflexes (Figs 17.5 and 17.6).

The assessment of optic nerve function includes measurement of visual acuity (using a Snellen test chart), colour vision (using Ishihara colour plates) and the visual fields (by confrontation and perimetry), and examination of the fundi with the ophthalmoscope. In addition the pupillary responses, mediated by both the optic and the oculomotor nerve (third cranial nerve), must be tested.

### Visual field defects

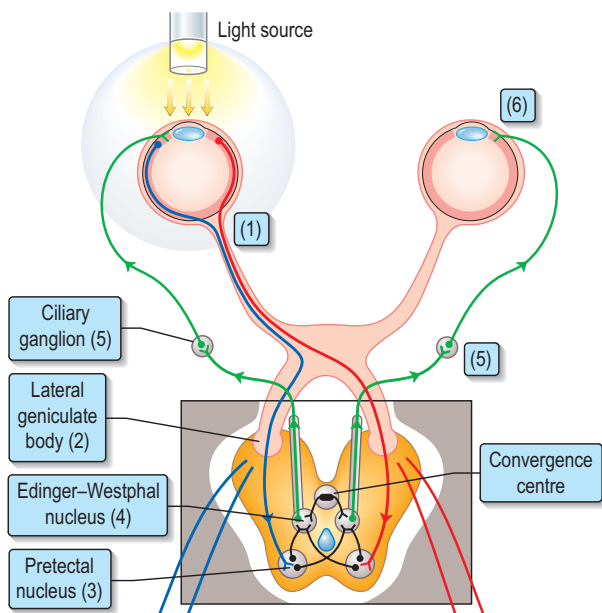
There are three main types of visual field defects (Fig. 17.5):

- Monocular, caused by damage to the eye or nerve
- Bitemporal, resulting from lesions at the chiasm



- 1, Paracentral scotoma – retinal lesion.
- 2, Monocular field loss – optic nerve lesion.
- 3, Bitemporal hemianopia – chiasmatic lesion.
- 4, Homonymous hemianopia – optic tract lesion.
- 5, Homonymous quadrantanopia – temporal lesion.
- 6, Homonymous quadrantanopia – parietal lesion.
- 7, Homonymous hemianopia – occipital cortex or optic radiation.
- 8, Homonymous hemianopia – occipital pole lesion.

**Fig. 17.5** Diagram of the visual pathways demonstrating the main field defects. At the optic chiasm (3), fibres derived from the nasal half of the retina (the temporal visual field) decussate, whereas the fibres from the temporal half of the retina remain uncrossed. Thus the right optic tract (4) is composed of fibres from the right half of each retina which ‘see’ the left half of both visual fields. Lesions of the retina (1) produce scotoma (small areas of visual loss) or quadrantanopia. Lesion at 2 produces blindness in the right eye with loss of direct light reflex. Lesion at 3 produces bitemporal hemianopia. Lesions at 4, 5 and 6 produce homonymous hemianopia with macular involvement. Lesions at 7 and 8 produce homonymous hemianopia with macular sparing at 7.



**Fig. 17.6** Pupillary light reflex.

*Afferent pathway*

- (1) A retinal image generates action potentials in the optic nerve.
- (2) These travel via axons, some of which decussate at the chiasm and pass through the lateral geniculate bodies.
- (3) Synapse at each pretectal nucleus.

*Efferent pathway*

- (4) Action potentials then pass to each Edinger–Westphal nucleus of III,
- (5) then, to the ciliary ganglion via the third nerve,
- (6) leading to constriction of the pupil being illuminated (direct reflex) and, by the consensual reflex, the contralateral pupil.

- Homonymous hemianopia, caused by lesions in the tract, radiation, or a lesion in the visual cortex.

**Optic nerve lesions** Unilateral visual loss, starting as a central or para-central scotoma (an area of depressed vision within the visual field), is characteristic of optic nerve lesions. Complete destruction of one optic nerve results in blindness in that eye and loss of the pupillary light reflex (direct and consensual). Optic nerve lesions result from demyelination (e.g. multiple sclerosis), nerve compression and occlusion of the retinal artery (e.g. in giant cell arteritis). Other causes include trauma, papilloedema, severe anaemia and drugs or toxins, e.g. ethambutol, quinine, tobacco and methyl alcohol.

**Defects of the optic chiasm** The most common cause of bitemporal hemianopia (i.e. blindness in the outer half of each visual field) is a pituitary adenoma, which compresses the decussating fibres from the nasal half of each eye. Other causes are craniopharyngioma and secondary neoplasm.

**Defects of the optic tract and radiation** Damage to the tracts or radiation, usually by tumour or a vascular accident, produces a homonymous hemianopia (blindness affecting either the right or the left half of each visual field) in one half of the visual field contralateral to the lesion.

**Defects of the occipital cortex** Homonymous hemianopic defects are caused by unilateral posterior cerebral artery infarction. The macular region may be spared in ischaemic lesions as a result of the dual blood supply to this area from the middle and posterior cerebral arteries. In contrast, injury to one occipital pole produces a bilateral macular (central) field defect.

## Optic disc oedema (papilloedema) and optic atrophy

The principal pathological appearances of the visible part of the nerve, the disc, are:

- Swelling (papilloedema)
- Pallor (optic atrophy).

**Papilloedema** Papilloedema produces few visual symptoms in the early stages. As disc oedema develops there is enlargement of the blind spot and blurring of vision. The exception is optic neuritis, in which there is early and severe visual loss. The common causes of papilloedema are:

- Raised intracranial pressure, e.g. from a tumour, an abscess or meningitis
- Retinal vein obstruction (thrombosis or compression)
- Optic neuritis (inflammation of the optic nerve, often caused by demyelination)
- Accelerated hypertension.

**Optic atrophy** Optic atrophy is the end result of many processes that damage the nerve (see Optic nerve lesions, above). The degree of visual loss depends upon the underlying cause.

## The pupils

The pupils constrict in response to bright light and convergence (when the centre of focus shifts from a distant to a near object). The parasympathetic efferents that control the constrictor muscle of the pupil arise in the Edinger–Westphal nucleus in the midbrain, and run with the oculomotor (third) nerve to the eye. The Edinger–Westphal nucleus receives afferents from the optic nerve (for the light reflex) and from the convergence centre in the midbrain (Fig. 17.6).

Sympathetic fibres which arise in the hypothalamus produce pupillary dilatation. They run from the hypothalamus through the brainstem and

cervical cord and emerge from the spinal cord at T1. They then ascend in the neck as the cervical sympathetic chain, and travel with the carotid artery into the head.

The main causes of persistent pupillary dilatation are:

- A third cranial nerve palsy (see later)
- Antimuscarinic eyedrops (instilled to facilitate examination of the fundus)
- The myotonic pupil (Holmes–Adie pupil): this is a dilated pupil seen most commonly in young women. There is absent (or much delayed) reaction to light and convergence. It is of no pathological significance and may be associated with absent tendon reflexes.

The main causes of persistent pupillary constriction are:

- Parasympathomimetic eyedrops used in the treatment of glaucoma.
- Horner's syndrome, resulting from the interruption of sympathetic fibres to one eye. There is unilateral pupillary constriction, slight ptosis (sympathetic fibres innervate the levator palpebrae superioris), enophthalmos (backward displacement of the eyeball in the orbit) and loss of sweating on the ipsilateral side of the face. A lesion affecting any part of the sympathetic pathway to the eye results in a Horner's syndrome. Causes include diseases of the cervical cord, e.g. syringomyelia, involvement of the T1 root by apical lung cancer (Pancoast's tumour), and lesions in the neck, such as trauma, surgical resection or malignant lymph nodes.
- Argyll Robertson pupil: this is the pupillary abnormality seen in neurosyphilis and occasionally in diabetes mellitus. There is a small irregular pupil which is fixed to light but which constricts on convergence.
- Opiate addiction.

## Cranial nerves III–XII

The cranial nerves III–XII may be damaged by lesions in the brainstem or during their intracranial and extracranial course. The site of a lesion may be suggested if clinical examination shows the involvement of other cranial nerves at that site.

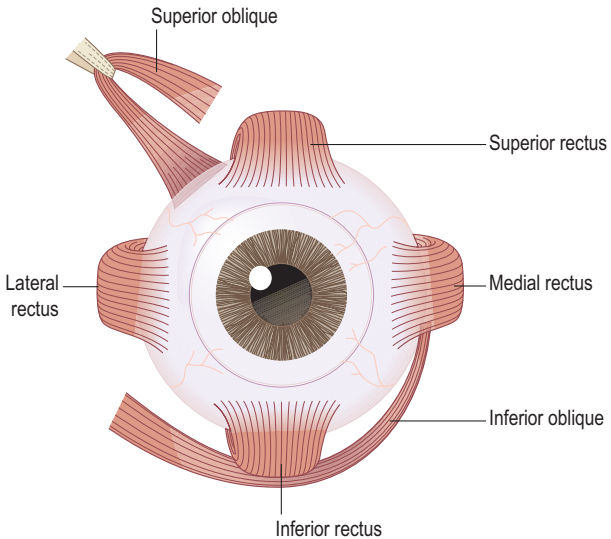
- A seventh-nerve palsy, together with cerebellar signs and involvement of the fifth, sixth and eighth cranial nerves, suggests a lesion of the cerebellopontine angle, commonly a meningioma or acoustic neuroma
- An isolated seventh-nerve palsy in a patient with a parotid tumour suggests involvement during its extracranial course in the parotid
- Cavernous sinus lesions (thrombosis, tumours, internal carotid artery aneurysm) involve the oculomotor nerves and the ophthalmic and sometimes maxillary division of the fifth cranial nerve during their intracranial course



- Conditions which can affect any cranial nerve are diabetes mellitus, sarcoidosis, vasculitis, syphilis and brainstem tumours, multiple sclerosis and infarction.

### The ocular movements and the third, fourth and sixth cranial nerves

These three cranial nerves supply the six external ocular muscles, which move the eye in the orbit (Fig. 17.7). The abducens nerve (sixth cranial nerve) supplies the lateral rectus muscle and the trochlear (fourth cranial nerve) supplies the superior oblique muscle. All the other extraocular muscles, the sphincter pupillae (parasympathetic fibres) and the levator palpebrae superioris are supplied by the oculomotor nerve (third cranial nerve). Normally the brainstem (with input from the cortex, cerebellum and vestibular nucleus) coordinates the functions of these three cranial nerves, so that eye movement is symmetrical (conjugate gaze). Thus *infranuclear* (*lower motor neurone*)



**Fig. 17.7** The action of the external ocular muscles. The muscles of the eye move the eyeball in various directions. The lateral rectus muscle moves the eyeball to the temple, away from the midline of the face. The medial rectus muscle moves the eyeball to the nose, toward the midline of the face. The superior rectus muscle moves the eyeball upward, and the inferior rectus muscle moves the eyeball downward. The superior oblique muscle moves the eyeball downward and outward. The inferior oblique muscle moves the eyeball upward and outward.

lesions of the third, fourth and sixth cranial nerves lead to paralysis of individual muscles or muscle groups. *Supranuclear (upper motor neurone)* lesions, e.g. brainstem involvement by multiple sclerosis, lead to paralysis of conjugate movements of the eyes.

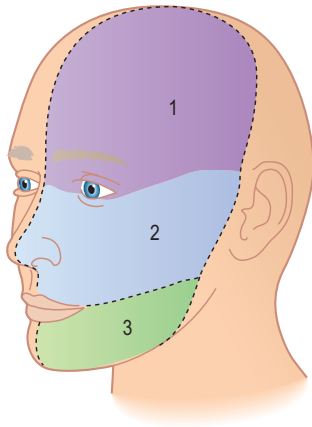
- Oculomotor (third) nerve lesions cause unilateral complete ptosis, the eye faces 'down and out', and the pupil is dilated and fixed to light and convergence. This is the picture of a complete third-nerve palsy, of which the most common cause is a 'berry' aneurysm arising in the posterior communicating artery, which runs alongside the nerve. Frequently the lesion is partial, particularly in diabetes mellitus, when parasympathetic fibres are spared and the pupil reacts normally.
- In lesions on the abducens (sixth) nerve the eye cannot be abducted beyond the midline. The unopposed pull of the medial rectus muscle causes the eye to turn inward, thereby producing a squint (squint, or *strabismus*, is the appearance of the eyes when the visual axes do not meet at the point of fixation). Patients complain of diplopia or double vision, which worsens when they attempt to gaze to the side of the lesion.
- Trochlear nerve lesions in isolation are rare. The patient complains of diplopia when attempting to look down and away from the affected side.

Disordered ocular movements may also result from disease of the ocular muscles (e.g. muscular dystrophy, dystrophia myotonica) or of the neuromuscular junction (e.g. myasthenia gravis). In these conditions all the muscles tend to be affected equally, presenting a generalized restriction of eye movements.

## The trigeminal nerve (fifth cranial nerve)

The trigeminal nerve has both motor and sensory functions and enters the brainstem at the level of the pons. The neurones for pain and temperature descend to the upper cervical spine before they synapse with neurones of the descending tract of the fifth nerve. Second order neurones then cross over and ascend to the thalamus. The sensory portion of this nerve supplies sensation to the face and scalp as far back as the vertex through its three divisions (Fig. 17.8). It also supplies the mucous membranes of the sinuses, the nose, mouth, tongue and teeth. The motor root travels with the mandibular division and supplies the muscles of mastication.

Diminution of the corneal reflex is often the first sign of a fifth-nerve lesion. A complete fifth-nerve lesion on one side causes unilateral sensory loss on the face, tongue and buccal mucosa. The jaw deviates to the side of the lesion when the mouth is opened. A brisk jaw jerk is seen with upper motor neurone lesions, i.e. above the motor nucleus in the pons.



**Fig. 17.8** Cutaneous distribution of the trigeminal nerve. (1) ophthalmic or first division; (2), maxillary or second division; (3), mandibular or third division.

A fifth nerve lesion is due to pathology within the brainstem (tumour, multiple sclerosis, infarction, syringobulbia), at the cerebellopontine angle (acoustic neuroma, other tumour), within the petrous temporal bone (spreading middle ear infection) or within the cavernous sinus (aneurysm of the internal carotid artery, tumour, thrombosis of the cavernous sinus).

## Trigeminal neuralgia

Trigeminal neuralgia (*tic douloureux*) is of unknown cause, seen most commonly in old age, and is almost always unilateral.

### Clinical features

Severe paroxysms of knife-like pain occur in one or more sensory divisions of the trigeminal nerve (see above), although rarely in the ophthalmic division. Each paroxysm is stereotyped, brought on by stimulation of a specific 'trigger zone' in the face. The stimuli may be minimal, and include washing, shaving and eating. There are no objective physical signs and the diagnosis is based on the history.

### Management

The anticonvulsant carbamazepine suppresses attacks in most patients. Phenytoin and gabapentin are also used but are less effective. If this fails, thermocoagulation of the trigeminal ganglion or section of the sensory division may be necessary.

## Differential diagnosis

Similar pain may occur with structural lesions involving the trigeminal nerve. These lesions are often accompanied by physical signs, e.g. a depressed corneal reflex.

### The facial nerve (seventh cranial nerve)

The facial nerve is largely motor in function, supplying the muscles of facial expression. It has, in addition, two major branches: the chorda tympani, which carries taste from the anterior two-thirds of the tongue, and the nerve to the stapedius muscle (this has a damping effect to protect the ear from loud noise). These two branches arise from the facial nerve during its intracranial course through the facial canal of the petrous temporal bone. Therefore, damage to the facial nerve in the temporal bone (e.g. Bell's palsy, trauma, herpes zoster, middle-ear infection) may be associated with undue sensitivity to sounds (hyperacusis) and loss of taste to the anterior two-thirds of the tongue.

### Lower motor neurone (LMN) lesions

A unilateral LMN lesion causes weakness of all the muscles of facial expression (cf. UMN, see below) on the same side as the lesion. The face, especially the angle of the mouth, falls and dribbling occurs from the corner of the mouth. There is weakness of frontalis, the eye will not close and the exposed cornea is at risk of ulceration. LMN facial palsy is caused by a lesion in the pons/medulla (and involving the VII cranial nerve nuclei) or by a lesion in the course of the facial nerve outside of the brainstem (posterior fossa, facial canal in the temporal bone, middle ear, parotid gland). The nerve may also be affected in polyneuritis (e.g. Guillain-Barré syndrome, Lyme disease), when there may be bilateral involvement. The commonest cause of LMN facial palsy is Bell's palsy.

**Bell's palsy** This is a common, acute, isolated unilateral facial nerve palsy that is probably the result of a viral infection (often herpes simplex) that causes swelling of the nerve within the petrous temporal bone. Peak incidence is between the ages of 65 and 74 years and it is more common in pregnancy.

### Clinical features

There is LMN weakness of the facial muscles, sometimes with loss of taste on the anterior two-thirds of the tongue. There may be hyperacusis and decreased production of tears.

### Investigations

The diagnosis is clinical. The differential diagnosis of LMN facial weakness includes the Ramsay Hunt syndrome (see below) and parotid gland

tumour. In addition, the facial nerve is the commonest cranial nerve lesion in meningitis associated with Lyme disease (erythema migrans on the limbs and trunk in a patient with a history of tick bite, p. 21) and in sarcoidosis (p. 547), in which bilateral involvement may occur. Bilateral Bell's palsy is rare. A prolonged steadily progressive weakness suggests a tumour.

## Management

The eyelid must be closed to protect the cornea from ulceration (either adhesive tape or, in prolonged cases surgical tarsorrhaphy). Oral prednisolone (60 mg/day for 10 days) given within 72 hours of onset increases the chance of a full recovery. Antivirals (e.g. valaciclovir) are used in addition in severe cases.

## Prognosis

Most patients recover completely, although 30% are left with a permanent weakness.

**Ramsay Hunt syndrome** This is herpes zoster (shingles) of the geniculate ganglion (the sensory ganglion for taste fibres) situated in the facial canal. There is an LMN facial palsy, with herpetic vesicles in the external auditory meatus and sometimes in the soft palate. Deafness may occur as a result of involvement of the eighth nerve in the facial canal. Treatment is with aciclovir.

## Upper motor neurone (UMN) lesions

An upper motor neurone lesion causes weakness of the lower part of the face on the side opposite the lesion. Upper facial muscles are spared because of the bilateral cortical innervation of neurones supplying the upper face. Wrinkling of the forehead (frontalis muscle) and eye closure are normal. The most common cause is a stroke, when there is an associated hemiparesis.

## The vestibulocochlear nerve (eighth cranial nerve)

The eighth cranial nerve has two components: cochlear and vestibular, subserving hearing and equilibrium respectively (Fig. 16.1). The clinical features of a cochlear nerve lesion are sensorineural deafness and tinnitus. Causes of a cochlear nerve lesion are within the brainstem (tumour, multiple sclerosis, infarction), cerebellopontine angle (acoustic neuroma and other tumours) and petrous temporal bone (trauma, middle ear infection, tumour). Sensorineural deafness may also be the result of disease of the cochlea itself: Ménière's disease (p. 705), drugs (e.g. gentamicin) and presbycusis (deafness of old age).

The main symptom of a vestibular nerve lesion is vertigo, which may be accompanied by vomiting. Nystagmus is the principal physical sign, often with ataxia (loss of balance).

## Vertigo

Vertigo is the definite illusion of movement – a sensation as if the external world were revolving around the patient. It results from disease of the inner ear, the eighth nerve or its central connections (p. 704).

## Nystagmus

Nystagmus is a rhythmic oscillation of the eyes, which must be sustained for more than a few beats to be significant. It is a sign of disease of either the ocular or the vestibular system and its connections. Nystagmus is described as either pendular or jerk.

**Pendular nystagmus** A pendular movement of the eye occurs; there is no rapid phase. It occurs where there is poor visual fixation (i.e. long-standing severe visual impairment) or a congenital lesion.

**Jerk nystagmus** Jerk nystagmus has a fast and a slow component to the rhythmic movement:

- Horizontal or rotary nystagmus may be either peripheral (middle ear) or central (brainstem and cerebellum) in origin. In peripheral lesions it is usually transient (minutes or hours); in central lesions it is long lasting (weeks, months or more).
- Vertical nystagmus is caused only by central lesions.

## Glossopharyngeal, vagus, accessory and hypoglossal nerves (ninth to twelfth cranial nerves)

The lower four cranial nerves (ninth to twelfth) which lie in the medulla (the 'bulb') are usually affected together; isolated lesions are rare. A *bulbar palsy* is a weakness of the lower motor neurone type, of the muscles supplied by these cranial nerves. There is dysarthria, dysphagia and nasal regurgitation. The tongue is weak, wasted and fasciculating. The most common causes of a bulbar palsy are motor neurone disease (p. 782), syringobulbia (p. 780) and Guillain–Barré syndrome (p. 788). Poliomyelitis is now rare. *Pseudobulbar palsy* is an upper motor neurone weakness of the same muscle groups. There is also dysarthria, dysphagia and nasal regurgitation, but the tongue is small and spastic and there is no fasciculation. The jaw jerk is exaggerated and the patient is emotionally labile. In many patients there is a partial palsy with only some of these features. The most common cause of pseudobulbar palsy is a stroke, but it may also occur in motor neurone disease and multiple sclerosis.

## COMMON INVESTIGATIONS IN NEUROLOGICAL DISEASE

### Blood tests

An elevated ESR or CRP may point to inflammatory conditions such as vasculitis. Comatose patients may be hypoglycaemic or hyponatraemic, and hypocalcaemia may lead to spasms and tetany.

### Imaging

**Skull and spinal X-rays** are used to identify fractures, metastases, enlargement of the pituitary fossa or intracranial calcification.

**Computed tomography (CT)** (p. 822) is of value in identifying cerebral tumours, intracerebral haemorrhage and infarction, subdural and extradural haematoma, midline shift of intracranial structures and cerebral atrophy. However, small lesions (<1 cm) or lesions with the same attenuation as bone or brain (e.g. plaques of multiple sclerosis, isodense subdural haematoma) are poorly seen. In addition lesions in the posterior fossa are sometimes missed.

**Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)** (p. 826) is of particular value in imaging tumours, infarction, haemorrhage, clot, multiple sclerosis plaques, the posterior fossa, the foramen magnum and the spinal cord. Patients with pacemakers or metallic fragments in the brain cannot be imaged and claustrophobia is an issue for some patients.

**Positron emission tomography (PET)** (p. 828) is principally used in the detection of occult neoplasms.

**Doppler studies** B-mode and colour ultrasound are valuable in the detection of stenosis of the carotid arteries.

**Electroencephalography (EEG)** The EEG measures brain electrical activity and is recorded from scalp electrodes on 16 channels simultaneously. Its main value is in diagnosing epilepsy and it is a sensitive test for encephalopathies; different patterns are seen with different encephalopathies. Patients with epilepsy often have a normal EEG between seizures. Evoked potentials record brain responses to sound (auditory evoked potentials), touch (somatosensory) and visual stimuli (visual evoked potentials).

**Lumbar puncture and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) examination** Lumbar puncture (LP) is central to the diagnosis of meningitis and encephalitis, but is also helpful in the diagnosis of other conditions, such as multiple sclerosis, neurosyphilis, sarcoidosis and Behçet's disease. It is used therapeutically for intrathecal injection of drugs or for removal of CSF in idiopathic intracranial hypertension. Brain imaging (CT or MRI) should be performed before LP in patients who have clinical features that increase the likelihood of having intracranial mass lesions or increase in CSF pressure which would preclude LP: immunosuppression, bleeding tendency, focal neurological signs, papilloedema, loss of consciousness or seizure. CSF pressure

(normally 80–180 mmH<sub>2</sub>O with small visible excursions related to pulse and respiration) is measured with a manometer and CSF fluid is collected into at least three separate numbered bottles. It should normally be clear and colourless. A decreasing concentration of red blood cells from bottles 1 to 3 indicates a traumatic tap, rather than blood in the CSF (indicating subarachnoid haemorrhage). Fluid should be sent for microscopy and culture, protein, and glucose concentration with a simultaneous plasma glucose sample. Additional investigations depend on the suspected diagnosis. Complications of LP are post-procedure headache, infection, and herniation of the brainstem through the foramen magnum ('coning').

**Electromyography (EMG)** records the electrical activity of muscles at rest and during voluntary contraction. Recordings are made by placing a small electrode needle into the muscle. EMG is usually performed in conjunction with *nerve conduction studies*, which measure the speed of conduction of impulses through a nerve. They will differentiate between axonal and demyelination neuropathy and determine whether pathology is focal or diffuse. These tests are used to investigate disease of the muscles, nerves or neuro-muscular junction.

## Investigation of suspected muscle disease

Measurement of serum creatine phosphokinase (CK) and aldose, EMG, and muscle biopsy for histology and immunohistochemical staining are the three main investigations used in the diagnosis of muscle disease. Muscle biopsy is performed under local anaesthetic with a small skin incision and muscle biopsy needle. MR imaging demonstrates areas of muscle inflammation, oedema and fibrosis. It can image a large bulk of muscle and avoids the sampling error associated with muscle biopsy. Serial images can be used to assess the response to treatment. Currently it is used as well as and not in place of biopsy.

## UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND COMA

The central reticular formation, which extends from the brainstem to the thalamus, influences the state of arousal. It consists of clusters of interconnected neurones throughout the brainstem, with projections to the spinal cord, the hypothalamus, the cerebellum and the cerebral cortex.

*Coma* is a state of unconsciousness from which the patient cannot be roused. A *stuporous* patient is sleepy but will respond to vigorous stimulation. The Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS; Table 17.6) is a simple grading system used to assess the level of consciousness. It is easy to perform and provides an objective assessment of the patient. Serial measurements are used to detect a deterioration which may indicate the need for further investigation or treatment. A very rapid assessment in an unstable patient is obtained using the AVPU score: Alert, responds to Voice, responds to Pain, Unresponsive. A



**Table 17.6** Glasgow Coma Scale

| Category   | Score |
|--|-------|
| <b>Eye opening (E)</b>   |       |
| Spontaneous  | 4     |
| To speech  | 3     |
| To pain  | 2     |
| None   | 1     |
| <b>Best verbal response (V)</b>  |       |
| Orientated   | 5     |
| Confused   | 4     |
| Inappropriate  | 3     |
| Incomprehensible   | 2     |
| None   | 1     |
| <b>Best motor response (M)</b>   |       |
| Obedying commands  | 6     |
| Localizing – use limb to resist a painful stimulus   | 5     |
| Limb withdrawing   | 4     |
| Limb flexing   | 3     |
| Limb extending   | 2     |
| None   | 1     |
| <i>The scores in each category are added up to give an overall score, which may vary from 3 (in the deeply comatose patient) to 15</i> |       |

patient responding to pain only, broadly corresponds to a GCS of less than 8.

Coma must be differentiated from persistent vegetative state (PVS, a state of wakefulness in which sleep–wake cycles persist but without detectable awareness), brain death (p. 742) in which there is no possibility of recovery, and the locked-in syndrome (p. 747). Patients in coma may progress to a PVS.

## Aetiology

Altered consciousness is produced by three types of processes:

- Diffuse brain dysfunction due to severe metabolic, toxic or neurological disorders
- Brainstem lesions which damage the reticular formation
- Pressure effect on the brainstem such as a cortical or cerebellar lesion which compresses the brainstem, inhibiting the ascending reticular activating system.

**Table 17.7** Principal causes of coma

| <b>Diffuse brain dysfunction</b>                   |
|--|
| Drug overdose, alcohol excess                      |
| CO poisoning, anaesthetic gases,                   |
| Hypo- or hyperglycaemia                            |
| Hypo- or hypercalcaemia – if severe                |
| Hypo- or hypernatraemia – if severe                |
| Hypoadrenalism                                     |
| Severe uraemia                                     |
| Hepatocellular failure                             |
| Metabolic acidosis                                 |
| Respiratory failure with CO <sub>2</sub> retention |
| Hypoxic/ischaemic brain injury                     |
| Subarachnoid haemorrhage                           |
| Hypertensive encephalopathy                        |
| Encephalitis, cerebral malaria, septicaemia        |
| <b>Direct effect within the brainstem</b>          |
| Haemorrhage/infarction                             |
| Tumour   |
| Demyelination, e.g. multiple sclerosis             |
| Wernicke–Korsakoff syndrome                        |
| Trauma   |
| <b>Pressure effect on brainstem</b>                |
| Tumour   |
| Haemorrhage/infarction                             |
| Abscess  |
| Encephalitis                                       |

The principal causes of coma and stupor are shown in Table 17.7. A common cause of coma in young adults is self-poisoning; world-wide, malaria is a frequent cause (p. 24).

## Assessment

In all patients presenting in coma a history should be obtained from any witnesses and relatives (e.g. speed of onset of coma, diabetes, drug or alcohol abuse, past medical history and medication).

**Immediate assessment** takes only seconds, but is essential:

- **Airway.** Clear the airway of vomit, secretions and foreign bodies. A patient not protecting their airway may need intubating.
- **Breathing.** Assess for cyanosis, respiratory rate (normal 12–20), use of accessory muscles of respiration (p. 506), chest auscultation, oxygen saturation by pulse oximetry. Consider intubation and ventilation.

- Circulation. Assess pulse, blood pressure and capillary refill (p. 576).
- Disability. Conscious level using the Glasgow coma score.
- Exposure. Full examination of the patient, e.g. head injury, abdominal examination.

**Further assessment** A full general examination should be carried out. Clues to the cause of coma should be looked for, e.g. the smell of alcohol or ketones (in diabetic ketoacidosis) on the breath, needle-track marks in a drug abuser, or a Medic-Alert bracelet, as carried by some diabetic people and patients on steroid-replacement therapy.

The neurological examination must include:

- Head and neck. Look for evidence of trauma, bruits and neck stiffness (indicating meningitis or subarachnoid haemorrhage).
- Pupils. Record size and reaction to light:
  - *A unilateral fixed dilated pupil* indicates herniation of the temporal lobe ('coning') through the tentorial hiatus and compression of the third cranial nerve (p. 731). This indicates the need for urgent neurosurgical intervention.
  - *Bilateral fixed dilated pupils* are a cardinal sign of brain death. They also occur in deep coma of any cause, but particularly coma caused by barbiturate intoxication or hypothermia.
  - *Pinpoint pupils* are seen with opiate overdose or with pontine lesions that interrupt the sympathetic pathways to the dilator muscle of the pupil.
  - *Midpoint pupils* that react to light are characteristic in coma of metabolic origin and coma caused by most CNS-depressant drugs.
- Fundi. Look for papilloedema, which indicates raised intracranial pressure.
- Eye movements. *Conjugate lateral deviation of the eyes* indicates ipsilateral cerebral haemorrhage or infarction (the eyes look away from the paralysed limbs), or a contralateral pontine lesion (towards the paralysed limbs). Passive head rotation normally causes conjugate ocular deviation in the direction opposite to the induced head movement (doll's head reflex). This reflex is lost in very deep coma and is absent in brainstem lesions.
- Motor responses. Asymmetry of spontaneous limb movements, tone and reflexes indicates a unilateral cerebral hemisphere or brainstem lesion. The plantar responses are often both extensor in coma of any cause.

## Investigations

In many cases the cause of coma will be evident from the history and examination, and appropriate investigations should then be carried out. However, if the cause is still unclear, further investigations will be necessary.

### Blood and urine tests

- Serum and urine for drug analysis, e.g. salicylates
- Serum for urea and electrolytes, liver biochemistry and calcium
- Blood glucose by immediate Stix testing and then formal laboratory testing
- Arterial blood gases
- Thyroid function tests and serum cortisol
- Blood cultures.

**Radiology** CT of the head may indicate an otherwise unsuspected mass lesion or intracranial haemorrhage.

**CSF examination** If a mass lesion is excluded on CT, lumbar puncture (p. 737) is performed if subarachnoid haemorrhage or meningoencephalitis is suspected.

### Management

The immediate management consists of treatment of the cause, careful nursing, meticulous attention to the airway and frequent observation to detect any change in vital function. Naloxone (400 µg i.v., p. 602) is given if opiate poisoning (pinpoint pupils, hypoventilation, drug addict) is suspected. Flumazenil (p. 600) is given if coma is a complication of benzodiazepines. Give thiamine 100 mg i.v. to alcohol dependents or malnourished patients.

### Prognosis

The outlook depends upon the cause of coma. A cause must be established before decisions are made about withdrawing supportive care.

## Brain death

Brain death means the irreversible loss of the capacity for consciousness, combined with the irreversible loss of the capacity to breathe. Two independent senior medical opinions are required for the diagnosis to be made. The three main criteria for diagnosis are as follows:

- Irremediable structural brain damage. A disorder that can cause brainstem death, e.g. intracranial haemorrhage, must have been diagnosed with certainty. Patients with hypothermia, significant electrolyte imbalance or drug overdose are excluded, but may be reassessed when these are corrected
- Absent motor responses to any stimulus. Spinal reflexes may be present
- Absent brainstem function, demonstrated by:
  - Pupils fixed and unresponsive to light
  - Absent corneal, gag and cough reflexes
  - Absent doll's head reflex (p. 741)

- Absent caloric responses: ice-cold water run into the external auditory meatus causes nystagmus when brainstem function is normal
- Lack of spontaneous respiration.

In suitable cases, and provided the patient was carrying a donor card and/or the consent of relatives has been obtained, the organs of those in whom brainstem death has been established may be used for transplantation.

## STROKE AND CEREBROVASCULAR DISEASE

Stroke is the second most common cause of death and a major cause of disability world-wide. The death rate following stroke is 20–25%. The incidence rises steeply with age; it is uncommon in those under 40 years. It is slightly more common in men. Hypertension is the most treatable stroke risk factor. A Face, Arm, Speech, Time (FAST, speech and/or arm weakness, dysphasia) is used outside of hospital by paramedics or relatives to facilitate early recognition of the symptoms of stroke and allow early action to be taken.

### Definitions

**Stroke** is defined as rapid onset of neurological deficit (usually focal) which is the result of a vascular lesion and associated with infarction of central nervous tissue. A completed stroke is when the neurological deficit has reached its maximum (usually within 6 hours).

**Stroke in evolution** is when the symptoms and signs are getting worse (usually within 24 hours of onset).

**A minor stroke** is one in which the patient recovers without a significant neurological deficit, usually within 1 week.

**Transient ischaemic attack** (TIA) is a transient episode of neurologic dysfunction caused by focal brain, spinal cord or retinal ischaemia without acute infarction. TIAs have a tendency to recur and may herald thromboembolic stroke.

### Pathophysiology

Different pathological events cause similar clinical events in cerebrovascular disease.

**Completed stroke** Most strokes (85%) are caused by cerebral infarction due to arterial embolism or thrombosis. Thrombosis occurs at the site of an atheromatous plaque in carotid, vertebral or cerebral arteries. Emboli arise from atheromatous plaques in the carotid/vertebrobasilar arteries, or from cardiac mural thrombi (e.g. following myocardial infarction), or from the left atrium in atrial fibrillation. In about 15% of cases stroke is caused by intracranial or subarachnoid haemorrhage.

Less commonly the clinical picture of stroke may be caused by intracranial venous thrombosis, multiple sclerosis relapse and a space-occupying lesion

in the brain, e.g. a tumour or abscess. In the latter the onset of symptoms and signs is usually much slower than in a stroke. In young adults one-fifth of strokes are caused by carotid or vertebral artery dissection allowing blood to track within the wall of the artery and occlude the lumen. It should be considered in those with recent neck pain, trauma, or manipulation of the neck. Diagnosis is by MR angiography.

**Transient ischaemic attacks** TIAs are usually the result of passage of microemboli (which subsequently lyse) arising from atheromatous plaques or from cardiac mural thrombi (see stroke above). The risk factors and causes of TIAs are the same as those for thromboembolic stroke. A TIA may also be caused by a temporary drop in cerebral perfusion (e.g. cardiac dysrhythmia, severe hyper- or hypoperfusion) and rarely tumours and subdural haematomas may produce a similar clinical picture.

## Risk factors

The major risk factors for thromboembolic stroke are those for atheroma, i.e. hypertension, diabetes mellitus, cigarette smoking and hyperlipidaemia. Others are obesity, oestrogen-containing oral contraceptives, excessive alcohol consumption and polycythaemia (hyperviscosity syndromes). Atrial fibrillation is a major risk factor for embolic stroke (rate 1–5% per year depending on age). Rarer causes of stroke are migraine, vasculitis, cocaine (by causing vasoconstriction), antiphospholipid syndrome (p. 302) and the thrombophilias (predispose to cerebral venous thrombosis).

## Transient ischaemic attacks (TIAs)

There is a sudden onset of focal neurological deficit with symptoms maximal at the onset and usually lasting 5–15 minutes; gradual progression of symptoms suggests a different pathology such as demyelination, tumour or migraine. Symptoms and signs depend on the site of the brain involved (Table 17.8). Amaurosis fugax is painless transient monocular blindness as a result

**Table 17.8** Features of transient ischaemic attacks in different arterial territories

| Carotid territory symptoms | Vertebrobasilar territory symptoms  |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Amaurosis fugax            | Diplopia, vertigo, vomiting         |
| Aphasia                    | Choking and dysarthria              |
| Hemiparesis                | Ataxia                              |
| Hemisensory loss           | Hemisensory loss                    |
| Hemianopic visual loss     | Hemianopic or bilateral visual loss |
|                            | Tetraparesis                        |
|                            | Loss of consciousness (rare)        |

of the passage of emboli through the retinal arteries. Dizziness, loss of consciousness and temporary memory loss (transient global amnesia) occurring on their own are not due to TIAs. The history and physical examination must include a search for risk factors and possible sources of emboli (atrial fibrillation, valve lesion, carotid bruits in the neck).

## Investigations

The diagnosis of TIA is clinical.

**Blood** is taken for measurement of glucose, full blood count (to identify polycythaemia), ESR (raised in the few cases of vasculitis), creatinine and electrolytes, cholesterol and INR (if taking warfarin).

**Brain imaging** by diffusion weighted magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) together with specialist review should be performed within 24 hours in patients with an ABCD2 score  $\geq 4$  (Table 17.9) or if they have crescendo TIAs (defined as two or more in a week); these patients are at highest risk of stroke. Computed tomography is used where MRI is contraindicated or unavailable. Brain imaging should be performed within 1 week in lower risk patients.

**Carotid artery imaging** Carotid doppler and duplex ultrasound scanning are performed (ideally within 1 week of onset of symptoms) to look for carotid atheroma and stenosis. MR angiography or CT angiography are performed if ultrasound suggests carotid stenosis to determine the degree of carotid artery stenosis.

## Treatment

**Antithrombotic treatment** Aspirin 300 mg should be given immediately and continued long term (75 mg once daily) with modified release dipyridamole

**Table 17.9** ABCD2 risk of stroke after a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

|  | Score    |
|--|----------|
| Age $\geq 60$ years  | 1 point  |
| Blood pressure $\geq 140$ mmHg systolic or 90 mmHg diastolic | 1 point  |
| Clinical features  | 2 points |
| Unilateral weakness  | 1 point  |
| Speech disturbance without weakness                          |          |
| Duration of TIA  | 2 points |
| $\geq 60$ minutes  | 1 point  |
| 10–59 minutes  |          |
| Presence of diabetes mellitus                                | 1 point  |

*Two day risk of stroke is 4.1% with a score 4–5 and 8.1% with a score 6–7.*

(200 mg twice daily). Clopidogrel (75 mg daily) is given for those patients intolerant of aspirin. Long-term anticoagulation with warfarin (after brain imaging) is given to patients in atrial fibrillation, with some valvular lesions (uninfected) or dilated cardiomyopathy.

**Other secondary prevention** This involves advice and treatment to reverse risk factors (p. 744). Control of hypertension (p. 483) is the single most important factor in the prevention of stroke. Treatment with a statin (e.g. simvastatin 40 mg daily) should be given to patients with a total cholesterol >3.5 mmol/l or low-density lipoprotein cholesterol >2.5 mmol/l.

**Carotid endarterectomy** is recommended in patients with internal carotid artery stenosis >70%. Successful surgery reduces the risk of further TIA/stroke by about 75%. Endarterectomy had a mortality of around 3% and a similar risk of stroke.

Patients should not drive for a month after TIA.

## Cerebral infarction

Most thromboembolic cerebral infarctions cause an obvious stroke. Following vessel occlusion brain ischaemia occurs, followed by infarction. The infarcted area is surrounded by a swollen area which can regain function with neurological recovery.

### Clinical features

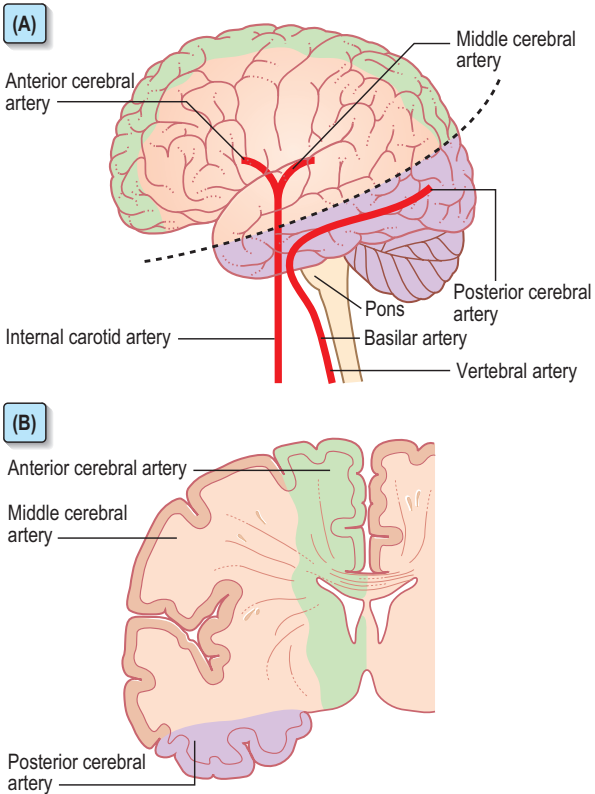
The neurological deficit produced by the occlusion of a vessel may be predicted by a knowledge of neuroanatomy and vascular supply (Figs 17.1 and 17.9). In practice it is less clear-cut because of collateral supply to brain areas.

**Cerebral hemisphere infarcts** The most common stroke is the hemiplegia caused by infarction of the internal capsule (the narrow zone of motor and sensory fibres that converges on the brainstem from the cerebral cortex; Fig. 17.1) following occlusion of a branch of the middle cerebral artery. The signs are contralateral to the lesion: hemiplegia (arm > leg), hemisensory loss, upper motor neurone facial weakness and hemianopia. Initially the patient has a hypotonic hemiplegia with decreased reflexes; within days this develops into a spastic hemiplegia with increased reflexes and an extensor plantar response, i.e. an upper motor neurone lesion (Table 17.4). Weakness may recover gradually over days or months. Lacunar infarcts are small infarcts that produce localized deficits, e.g. pure motor stroke, pure sensory stroke.

**Brainstem infarction** Brainstem infarction causes complex patterns of dysfunction depending on the sites involved:

- *The lateral medullary syndrome*, the most common of the brainstem vascular syndromes, is caused by occlusion of the posterior inferior cerebellar artery. It presents with sudden vomiting and vertigo, ipsilateral





**Fig. 17.9** The arterial supply to the brain. (A) The area above the dotted line is supplied by the internal carotid artery and the area below the line is supplied by the vertebral artery. (B) A coronal section through the brain. The anterior cerebral artery supplies the medial surface of the hemisphere and the middle cerebral artery supplies the lateral surface of the hemisphere, including the internal capsule.

Horner's syndrome, facial numbness, cerebellar signs and palatal paralysis with a diminished gag reflex. On the side opposite the lesion there is loss of pain and temperature sensation.

- *Coma* as a result of involvement of the reticular activating system.
- *The locked-in syndrome* in which all voluntary muscles are paralysed except for those that control eye movement is caused by upper brainstem infarction
- *Pseudobulbar palsy* (p. 736) is caused by lower brainstem infarction.

**Multi-infarct dementia** (vascular dementia) is a syndrome caused by multiple small cortical infarcts, resulting in generalized intellectual loss; there is a stepwise progression with each infarct. The final picture is of dementia, pseudobulbar palsy and a shuffling gait resembling Parkinson's disease.

## Management

Stroke is a medical emergency – 'time lost is brain lost'. Immediate management is summarized in Emergency Box 17.1. Patients with a cerebellar infarct causing hydrocephalus or a large cerebral infarct with brain oedema and a risk of brain herniation should be referred for immediate neurosurgical evaluation.



### Emergency Box 17.1

#### Immediate management of acute stroke

##### Investigations

- *Brain CT (or MRI)*. Demonstrates the site of the lesion; distinguishes between ischaemic/haemorrhagic stroke; identifies conditions mimicking stroke, e.g. cerebral tumour or abscess. Imaging is performed immediately (at the next scanning slot) in the following circumstances:
  - patient presents within the time frame for thrombolysis
  - early anticoagulation is indicated
  - recent history of head injury
  - severe headache at onset of stroke symptoms
  - patient is taking anticoagulant treatment or has a known bleeding tendency
  - depressed level of consciousness (Glasgow coma score <13).

Otherwise brain imaging is performed within 24 hours of onset of symptoms. MRI is indicated if the underlying pathology is uncertain, the diagnosis is in doubt (CT may not show an infarct in the first few hours), or imaging is delayed for more than 10 days after stroke.

- *Blood tests* are similar to TIA (p. 745).
- *ECG*: to look for atrial fibrillation, myocardial infarction.

##### Treatment

- *Aspirin*. Aspirin 300 mg daily (orally, via nasogastric tube or rectally) should be given as soon as possible after the onset of stroke symptoms once a diagnosis of primary intracerebral haemorrhage has been excluded by brain imaging.
- *Thrombolysis*. Intravenous alteplase (tPA, p. 248) improves functional outcome if given within 4.5 hours of the onset of symptoms in *acute ischaemic stroke*. It is given immediately haemorrhage has been

excluded in the emergency department provided that patients can be managed in an acute stroke service with appropriate support from a stroke physician. Contraindications are listed on page 248.

- *Hypertension.* Blood pressure should only be lowered in the acute phase where there are likely to be complications of hypertension such as hypertensive encephalopathy, heart failure, or aortic dissection.

### Supportive care

- *Stroke unit.* Dedicated stroke units improve outcome compared to management on a general ward.
- *Swallowing and feeding.* Dysphagia is common and may cause aspiration pneumonia and nutritional deficit. Formal assessment of swallowing by trained staff is performed on admission and if the admission screen indicates swallowing problems specialist assessment (Speech and Language Therapy, SALT) is made within 24–72 hours. Feeding by fine-bore nasogastric tube or percutaneous gastrostomy may be necessary.
- *Unconscious patient.* Maintenance of hydration, frequent turning to avoid pressure sores and other supportive measures.
- *Prevention of deep venous thrombosis* by TED stockings. Heparin is not given.

Detailed clotting studies and autoantibody screen to look for evidence of conditions associated with thrombophilia (see Table 5.17) are indicated in younger patients with unexplained stroke. Echocardiography (in suspected cardioembolic stroke) and syphilis serology are performed in selected patients. Anticoagulation is given immediately for cerebral venous thrombosis but delayed for 14 days after the onset of ischaemic stroke in atrial fibrillation due to the risk of bleeding into the infarcted area. Carotid artery imaging, antithrombotic treatment and secondary prevention is similar to TIA (p. 746). Internal carotid endarterectomy or stenting reduces the risk of recurrent stroke (by 75%) in patients who have had an infarct and who have internal carotid artery stenosis which narrows the arterial lumen by more than 70%. It is considered in patients with a non-disabling stroke who are likely to have some recoverable function.

Further management of the stroke patient centres on identification and treatment of risk factors (p. 744) and rehabilitation to restore function. Optimal care is on a stroke rehabilitation unit that provides multidisciplinary services, coordinates disability-related medical care and trains caregivers. Physiotherapy is particularly useful in the first few months in reducing spasticity, relieving contractures and teaching patients to use walking aids. Following recovery, the occupational therapist plays a valuable role in assessing the requirement for and arranging the provision of various aids and

modifications in the home, such as stair rails, hoists, or wheelchairs. Patients and relatives may gain useful information and support from a Stroke Association (e.g. <http://www.stroke.org.uk>).

## Prognosis

About one-quarter of patients will die in the first 2 years following a stroke; the prognosis is worse for bleeds than for infarction. Gradual improvement usually follows stroke, with a plateau reached 3–4 months after stroke onset, although one-third of long-term survivors are permanently dependent on the help of others. Only 25% of patients return to a level of everyday participation and physical functioning of community-matched persons who have not had a stroke. About 10% of all patients will suffer a recurrent stroke within 1 year.

## Primary intracranial haemorrhage

### Intracerebral haemorrhage

Major risk factors for intracerebral haemorrhage are hypertension, excess alcohol consumption, increasing age and smoking. These risk factors lead to secondary vascular changes such as small vessel disease and arterial aneurysms which may eventually rupture and bleed. Presentation is with sudden loss of consciousness and stroke (see above) often accompanied by a severe headache. Diagnosis is made on brain imaging by CT or MRI. Anticoagulants should be stopped in patients with intracerebral haemorrhage and the effects reversed by prothrombin complex concentrate. A decision to restart anticoagulants (usually stopped for 7–10 days after an intracerebral haemorrhage) is made on case by case basis. Patients with a large intracerebral haematoma causing deepening coma or brainstem compression or patients with a cerebellar bleed causing hydrocephalus as a result of obstruction of the drainage pathways for CSF fluid should be referred for immediate neurosurgical evaluation.

### Subarachnoid haemorrhage (SAH)

Subarachnoid haemorrhage means spontaneous rather than traumatic arterial bleeding into the subarachnoid space.

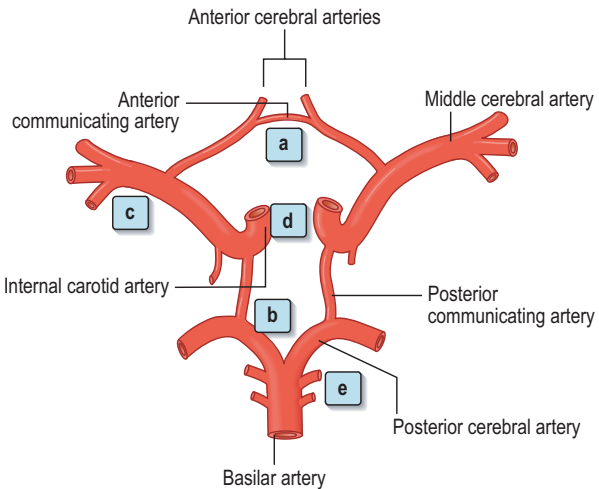
### Incidence

SAH accounts for 5% of strokes and has an annual incidence of 6 per 100 000. The mean age of patients at presentation is 50 years.

### Aetiology

SAH is caused by rupture of:

- Saccular ('berry') aneurysms in 70% of cases. These are acquired lesions that are most commonly located at the branching points (Fig. 17.10) of



**Fig. 17.10** The main cerebral arteries showing the circle of Willis and the most common sites for berry aneurysms. Frequency of occurrence, a–e (decreasing order): a, anterior communicating artery; b, origin of the posterior communicating artery; c, trifurcation of the middle cerebral artery; d, termination of the internal carotid artery; e, basilar artery.

the major arteries coursing through the subarachnoid space at the base of the brain (the circle of Willis).

- Congenital arteriovenous malformations in 10%.

In 20% of cases no lesion can be found.

## Clinical features

Most intracranial aneurysms remain asymptomatic until they rupture and cause a SAH. Some, however, become symptomatic because of a mass effect, and the most common symptom is a painful third-nerve palsy (p. 731). The typical presentation of SAH is the sudden onset of severe headache, often occipital, that reaches maximum intensity immediately or within minutes. The headache is typically described as the ‘worst ever’ and there is absence of similar headaches in the past. It is often accompanied by nausea and vomiting, and sometimes loss of consciousness. On examination there may be signs of meningeal irritation (neck stiffness and a positive Kernig’s sign), focal neurological signs and subhyaloid haemorrhages (between the retina and vitreous membrane) with or without papilloedema. Some patients have experienced small warning headaches a few days before the major bleed.

## Investigation

- CT scan is the investigation of choice and should be undertaken as soon as possible. It shows subarachnoid or intraventricular blood in 95% of cases undergoing scanning within 24 hours of the haemorrhage; the sensitivity decreases after that time.
- Lumbar puncture (LP, p. 737) is indicated if there is a strong clinical suspicion of a SAH but the CT scan is normal. An increase in pigments (bilirubin and/or oxyhaemoglobin released from lysis and phagocytosis of red blood cells) is the key finding which supports the diagnosis of SAH. LP must be performed at least 12 hours after symptom onset to allow sufficient time for haemoglobin to degrade into oxyhaemoglobin and bilirubin. Detection of oxyhaemoglobin without bilirubin makes SAH less likely. Pigments in the CSF are detected by spectrophotometry of the supernatant after centrifugation of the last fraction of CSF taken at lumbar puncture. The specimen should be protected from light. Bilirubin can be detected in the CSF for up to 2 weeks after SAH.
- MR angiography is usually performed to establish the source of bleeding in all patients potentially fit for surgery.

## Management

Immediate management consists of bed rest and supportive measures with cautious control of hypertension. Nimodipine, a calcium-channel blocker, is given by mouth (60 mg 4-hourly) or by intravenous infusion (1–2 mg per hour via a central line) to reduce cerebral artery spasm, a cause of ischaemia and further neurological deterioration. Hyponatraemia (which contributes to delayed cerebral ischaemia) occurs due to urinary salt loss and patients may require large volumes of intravenous 0.9% saline to maintain normal sodium concentrations. All patients should be discussed with a neurosurgeon. Obliteration of the aneurysm by surgical clipping or insertion of a fine wire coil under radiological guidance prevents rebleeding. Surviving patients should be advised on secondary prevention, especially on treatment of hypertension and the need to stop smoking.

## Prognosis

Approximately 50% of patients die suddenly or soon after the haemorrhage. A further 10–20% die in the early weeks in hospital from further bleeding. The outcome is variable in the survivors; some patients are left with major neurological deficits. Glasgow coma score on admission has the most prognostic significance; patients with a score >12 usually have a good outcome.

## Subdural haematoma (SDH)

SDH means accumulation of blood in the subdural space following the rupture of a vein running from the hemisphere to the sagittal sinus. It is almost always

the result of head injury, often minor, and the latent interval between injury and symptoms may be weeks or months. Elderly patients and alcoholics are particularly susceptible because they are accident prone and their atrophic brains make the connecting veins more susceptible to rupture. The main clinical symptoms are headache, drowsiness and confusion, which may fluctuate. The diagnosis is usually made on CT, and treatment is by surgical removal of the haematoma.

## Extradural haemorrhage

Extradural haematomas are caused by injuries that fracture the temporal bone and rupture the underlying middle meningeal artery. Clinically there is the picture of a head injury with a brief period of unconsciousness followed by a lucid interval of recovery. This is then followed by rapid deterioration with focal neurological signs and deterioration in conscious level if surgical drainage is not immediately carried out.

## EPILEPSY AND LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

### Epilepsy

A seizure is a convulsion or transient abnormal event caused by a paroxysmal discharge of cerebral neurones. Epilepsy is the continuing tendency to have such seizures. Epilepsy is common, with 2% of the UK population having two or more seizures during their lives, and in 0.5% epilepsy is an active problem.

### Classification

Seizures are classified clinically as partial or generalized (Table 17.10). Partial seizures involve only a portion of the brain at their onset (e.g. temporal lobe), although these may later become generalized (secondarily generalized tonic-clonic seizures):

- *Generalized tonic-clonic seizures (grand mal seizures)*. There is a sudden onset of a rigid tonic phase followed by a convulsion (clonic phase) in which the muscles jerk rhythmically. The episode lasts typically for seconds to minutes, may be associated with tongue biting and incontinence of urine, and is followed by a period of drowsiness or coma for several hours.
- *Typical absence seizures (petit mal)*. This is usually a disorder of childhood in which the child ceases activity, stares and pales for a few seconds only. It is characterized by 3-Hz spike and wave activity on the electroencephalogram (EEG). Children with petit mal tend to develop generalized tonic-clonic seizures in adult life.
- *Myoclonic, tonic and akinetic seizures* There is isolated muscle jerking (myoclonic), intense stiffening of the body (tonic) or cessation of movement, falling and loss of consciousness (akinetic).

**Table 17.10** The commoner types of seizure

| Generalized seizure types  |
|--|
| <i>Bilateral abnormal electrical activity with bilateral motor manifestations and impaired consciousness</i> |
| Absence seizures (petit mal)   |
| Generalised tonic–clonic seizures (grand mal)  |
| Myoclonic seizures   |
| Tonic seizures   |
| Akinetic seizures  |
| Partial seizure types  |
| <i>Electrical activity starts in one area of the brain</i>   |
| Simple partial seizures (without impaired awareness, e.g. Jacksonian seizures)                               |
| Complex partial seizures (with impaired awareness)   |
| Partial seizures evolving to tonic–clonic seizures   |
| Apparent generalized tonic–clonic seizures, with ECG but not clinical evidence of focal onset                |
| Unclassifiable seizures  |
| Seizures that do not fit a category above  |

- Partial seizures** involve epileptic activity in a part of the brain and are simple (not affecting consciousness or memory) or complex (affecting awareness or memory before, during or immediately after the seizure). Patients with focal seizures have symptoms depending on the area of the brain where the seizure starts, often the temporal lobe. The seizures may become generalized to affect the whole brain (secondary generalization). Jacksonian (motor) seizures originate in the motor cortex. They typically result in jerking movements, typically beginning in the corner of the mouth or thumb and index finger, and spreading to involve the limbs on the opposite side of the epileptic focus. Paralysis of the involved limbs may follow for several hours (Todd's paralysis). Temporal lobe seizures are associated with olfactory and visual hallucinations, blank staring, feelings of unreality (jamais-vu) or undue familiarity (déjà-vu) with the surroundings.

## Aetiology and precipitants

Flashing lights or a flickering television screen may provoke an attack in susceptible patients. A cause for epilepsy is found in less than one-third of cases in UK surveys. Known causes include cerebrovascular disease (15%), cerebral tumours (6%), alcohol-related seizures (6%), post-traumatic epilepsy (2%) and other rarer intracerebral causes. Occasionally, metabolic disturbances such as hypoglycaemia, acute hypoxia, hypocalcaemia,



hyponatraemia, uraemia and hepatocellular failure present with convulsions.

About 30% of patients have a first-degree relative with epilepsy, although the exact mode of inheritance is unknown. Primary epilepsies are due to complex developmental abnormalities of neuronal control; there are abnormalities in synaptic connections and distribution and release of neurotransmitters.

## Evaluation and investigation

There are three steps in the evaluation of a patient with possible epilepsy:

1. Confirm if the patient has epilepsy. The diagnosis is made clinically and a detailed description of the attack from an eye-witness is invaluable. Disorders causing attacks of altered consciousness must be differentiated from epilepsy (Table 17.3).
2. Determine the patient's seizure type (see classification).
3. Identify any underlying cause for epilepsy:
  - The electroencephalogram (EEG) is used to assist in the classification of epilepsy and to confirm the clinical suspicion. It is frequently normal between attacks and false positive 'non-specific' abnormalities may be present in non-epileptics. During a seizure the EEG is almost always abnormal and is shown typically by a cortical spike focus (e.g. in a temporal lobe) or by generalized spike and wave activity. Video-EEG recording is used where the diagnosis of epilepsy is in doubt.
  - Brain imaging is indicated in all new cases to exclude an underlying lesion. CT is used in the emergency setting to look for a space occupying lesion, e.g. tumour. MRI with imaging of the hippocampi is used routinely to study epilepsy.

## Management

### Emergency measures

The emergency treatment is to ensure that patients harm themselves as little as possible and that the airway remains patent. Most seizures stop spontaneously. A prolonged seizure (longer than 3 minutes) or repeated seizures are treated with rectal (10 mg) or i.v. diazepam or lorazepam. Repeated seizures with brief periods of recovery may lead to status epilepticus.

**Status epilepticus** This is a medical emergency. There are continuous seizures without recovery of consciousness. When grand mal seizures follow one another, there is a risk of death from cardiorespiratory failure. Precipitating factors in a known epileptic include abruptly stopping antiepileptic treatment, intercurrent illness, alcohol abuse and poor compliance with therapy; over 50% of all episodes occur in patients without any history of epilepsy. Rectal diazepam or buccal midazolam (10 mg) is given out of hospital.

Management in hospital is summarized in Emergency Box 17.2. EEG monitoring in refractory status or diagnosis in doubt (consider pseudostatus – non-epileptic attacks with a psychological basis). Once status is controlled regular anticonvulsant therapy is continued to prevent subsequent fits. Intravenous treatment is withdrawn when anticonvulsant therapy is established.

### Antiepileptic drugs (AEDs)

AEDs are indicated when there is a firm clinical diagnosis of recurrent seizures or after a first seizure with features associated with a high risk of seizure recurrence (abnormal EEG and/or structural brain abnormality on imaging). Treatment is started with a single first-line antiepileptic drug (Table 17.11). Monotherapy is the aim and the dose is increased until seizure control is achieved or tolerance exceeded. Routine measurement of serum drug



## Emergency Box 17.2

### Management and investigation of status epilepticus

#### General measures

- Administer oxygen
- Secure venous access via a large vein; many anticonvulsants cause phlebitis
- Cardiorespiratory monitoring and pulse oximetry
- Thiamine, 250 mg i.v. over 10 minutes, if nutrition poor or alcohol abuse suspected. In the UK give Vitamin B and C, high-potency ampoules, one pair i.v. over 10 minutes.

#### Control of seizures

*First line.* Lorazepam 4 mg i.v. at 2 mg/min, repeated after 10 minutes if no response. Give rectal diazepam (10–20 mg) if no intravenous access. Lorazepam may cause respiratory depression and hypotension, and facilities for resuscitation should be available.

*Second line.* If seizures continue, give phenytoin 18 mg/kg i.v. 50 mg/min or fosphenytoin (p. 800). Both may cause cardiac dysrhythmias, and ECG monitoring is necessary.

*Third line.* Phenobarbital 15 mg/kg at a rate not exceeding 100 mg/min and repeated at intervals of 6–8 hours if necessary. If seizures continue despite these measures, use tiopental or propofol general anaesthesia with assisted ventilation.

#### Investigations

- Urgent: blood glucose, serum electrolytes including calcium and magnesium, drug screen, anticonvulsant levels
- Consider brain CT scan, lumbar puncture and blood cultures, depending on clinical circumstances.

**Table 17.11** First-line treatment depending on seizure type

| Seizure type  | Drug                          | Major side-effects of drug treatment  |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Generalized tonic–clonic  | Sodium valproate <sup>†</sup> | Weight gain, hair loss, liver damage, blood dyscrasias                          |
|   | Lamotrigine                   | TEN   |
|   | Carbamazepine                 | Rashes, leucopenia, TEN   |
|   | Topiramate                    | Weight loss, renal stones, glaucoma   |
|   | Phenytoin*                    | Rashes, blood dyscrasias, lymphadenopathy, SLE, TEN, gum hypertrophy, hirsutism |
| Petit mal   | Sodium valproate <sup>†</sup> |   |
|   | Ethosuximide                  | Rashes, blood dyscrasias, night terrors   |
| Partial seizures  | Lamotrigine                   |   |
|   | Carbamazepine                 |   |
|   | Sodium valproate              |   |
|   | Phenytoin*                    |   |
| <p><i>*in developing countries; TEN, toxic epidermal necrolysis; SLE, systemic lupus erythematosus.</i></p> <p><i>†avoid in women of childbearing age; associated with highest risk of major congenital malformation in fetuses exposed to drug during pregnancy.</i></p> |                               |   |

levels is necessary only for phenytoin and phenobarbital. Levels should also be measured if non-compliance is suspected or if there are signs of toxicity. Idiosyncratic side-effects (i.e. non-dose related), which tend to be more common than dose-related effects, are listed in Table 17.11. Intoxication with all anticonvulsants causes a syndrome of ataxia, nystagmus and dysarthria. Side-effects of chronic administration of phenytoin (gum hypertrophy, hypertrichosis, osteomalacia and folate deficiency) are reduced by maintaining serum levels within the therapeutic range. Phenytoin is a potent hepatic enzyme inducer and will reduce the efficacy of the contraceptive pill. Many new drugs have been developed and there remain different views about the most appropriate drugs for each seizure type.

**Drug withdrawal** Gradual withdrawal of drugs should only be undertaken when the patient has been seizure-free for at least 2 years, and is only achieved successfully in less than 50%. Many patients will have further fits, resulting in a threat to employment and driving (see below).

## Neurosurgical treatment

Surgical treatment, e.g. amputation of the anterior temporal lobe, cures epilepsy in 50% of patients with poorly controlled epilepsy and a clearly

defined focus of abnormal electrical activity (<1% of all patients with epilepsy).

### Advice to patients

Patients should restrict their lives as little as possible but follow simple advice, e.g. avoid swimming alone, avoid dangerous sports, such as rock climbing, leave the door open when taking a bath. In European Union member states, patients with epilepsy (whether on or off treatment) may drive a motor vehicle (cars, vans, motorcycles) provided that they have been seizure-free for a year. Patients who wish to drive heavy goods vehicles (buses, lorries, etc.) must have been seizure-free and off all anti-epileptic drugs for 10 years or more.

## MOVEMENT DISORDERS

The extrapyramidal system is a general term for the basal ganglia and their connections with other brain areas, particularly those concerned with movement. The overall function of this system is the initiation and modulation of movement. Extrapyramidal or movement disorders are:

- Akinetic–rigid syndromes, i.e. slowed movement with increased muscle tone
- Dyskinesias – added uncontrollable movements.

Table 17.12 outlines the clinical varieties: Parkinson's disease and essential tremor are the most common.

**Table 17.12** Movement disorders

### Akinetic–rigid syndromes

Idiopathic Parkinson's disease  
 Drug-induced parkinsonism, e.g. phenothiazines  
 MPTP-induced parkinsonism  
 Postencephalitic parkinsonism  
 'Parkinsonism plus'  
 Wilson's disease  
 Childhood akinetic–rigid syndromes

### Dyskinesias

Essential tremor  
 Chorea  
 Hemiballismus  
 Myoclonus  
 Tics  
 Dystonias  
 Paroxysmal dyskinesias

*MPTP, methylphenyltetrahydroiridine*

## Akinetic–rigid syndromes

### Idiopathic Parkinson's disease

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a common neurodegenerative disease developing predominantly in older people. The clinical features principally result from the progressive depletion of dopamine-secreting cells in the substantia nigra. These neurones project to the striatum and their loss leads to alteration in activity of the neural circuits within the basal ganglia that regulate movement. Disruption of dopamine along the non-striatal pathways accounts for the neuropsychiatric pathology associated with PD. Cell loss in PD is thought to be due to abnormal accumulation of alpha-synuclein bound to ubiquitin which forms cytoplasmic inclusions called Lewy bodies.

### Aetiology

The cause of the disease is unknown. Factors possibly involved are:

- MPTP (methylphenyl-tetrahydropyridine) an impurity produced during illegal synthesis of opiates produces severe parkinsonism.
- Survivors of an epidemic of encephalitis lethargica in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century developed parkinsonism. However, there is no evidence that idiopathic PD is caused by an environmental toxin or an infective agent.
- Parkinson's disease is less prevalent in tobacco smokers than in lifelong abstainers.
- Genetic factors. There is clustering of early-onset PD in some families. Mutations in the Parkin gene,  $\alpha$ -synuclein gene and ubiquitin carboxyl-terminal hydrolase L1 gene have been found in some of these families. Relevance to the common sporadic older PD cases is unclear.

### Clinical features

The combination of rest tremor, rigidity and bradykinesia (slow movements) develops over months or several years together with changes in posture. These features are initially more prominent on one side:

- *Tremor*. This is a characteristic 4–7 Hz resting tremor (cf. cerebellar disease), usually most obvious in the hands ('pill-rolling' of the thumb and fingers), improved by voluntary movement and made worse by anxiety.
- *Rigidity* refers to the increase in tone in the limbs and trunk. The limbs resist passive extension throughout movement (lead pipe rigidity, or cogwheel when combined with tremor), in contrast to the hypertonia of an upper motor neurone lesion (p. 720), where resistance falls away as the movement continues (clasp-knife).
- *Akinesia* ('poverty of movement'). There is difficulty in initiating movement (starting to walk, or rising from a chair). The face is expressionless

and unblinking. Speech is slow and monotonous. The writing becomes small (micrographia) and tends to tail off at the end of a line.

- **Postural changes.** A stoop is characteristic. The gait is shuffling, festinant (hurrying) and with poor arm swinging. The posture is sometimes called 'simian', to describe the forward flexion, immobility of the arms and lack of facial expression. Balance is poor, with a tendency to fall.

Non-motor features may predate motor features and consist of neuropsychiatric symptoms (depression, hallucinations, dementia, impulsive behaviours), sleep disorders (insomnia, sleep fragmentation, vivid dreams), gastrointestinal and autonomic disorders (drooling of saliva, excess sweating, dysphagia, constipation) and fatigue and weight loss. There is gradual progression of the disease over 10–15 years, with death resulting most commonly from bronchopneumonia.

## Investigations

The diagnosis is clinical. Other brain diseases (e.g. multi-infarct dementia, repeated head injury) can cause features of *parkinsonism*, i.e. slowing, rigidity and tremor, which can usually be differentiated from idiopathic PD on clinical grounds; brain imaging (MRI or CT) is sometimes needed

## Management

The decision to start treatment is determined by the degree to which the patient is functionally impaired. Treatment does not alter the natural history. Initial therapy is with one of:

**Levodopa** (L-dopa, a dopamine precursor) with a peripheral dopa-decarboxylase inhibitor – benserazide or carbidopa. This combined therapy reduces the peripheral side-effects, principally nausea, of L-dopa and its metabolites. Over the years, therapy may become less effective, even with increasing doses. Patients may also switch between periods of dopamine-induced dyskinesias (choreas and dystonic movements) and periods of immobility ('on-off' syndrome).

**Dopamine agonists** are non-ergot dopamine agonists (ropinirole, pramipexole, rotigotine). Possible side-effects are impulse control disorders (pathological gambling, compulsive shopping, hypersexuality) and excessive daytime sleepiness.

**Monoamine oxidase B inhibitor** (e.g. selegiline) inhibits the catabolism of dopamine in the brain.

The options for managing disease progression and the loss of smooth motor control associated with levodopa-based drugs are shortening the interval between drug dosing and increasing the dose, adding or swapping to other antiparkinsonian drugs (see above), using catechol-O-methyl transferase inhibitors (entacapone, tolcapone) to prevent peripheral breakdown of L-dopa or using apomorphine by subcutaneous pump.

**Additional treatment** Physiotherapy can improve gait and help to prevent falls. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors are the treatment of choice for depression. Stereotactic neurosurgery is occasionally used to reduce motor fluctuations and dyskinesia. Information and support for patients and relatives is provided by the Parkinson's Disease Society (<http://www.parkinsons.org.uk>).

## Other akinetic-rigid syndromes

### Drug-induced parkinsonism

Reserpine, phenothiazines and butyrophenones block dopamine receptors and may induce a parkinsonian syndrome with slowness and rigidity, but usually with little tremor. These syndromes tend not to progress, they respond poorly to L-dopa, and the correct management is to stop the offending drug.

### 'Parkinsonism plus'

This describes rare disorders in which there is parkinsonism and evidence of a separate pathology. *Progressive supranuclear palsy* is the most common disorder and consists of axial rigidity, dementia and signs of parkinsonism, together with gaze paresis. Other examples are *multiple system atrophy* (early severe autonomic neuropathy), such as olivo-ponto-cerebellar degeneration and primary autonomic failure (Shy-Drager syndrome). Unlike idiopathic PD, there is a poor response to L-dopa in these conditions.

## Dyskinesias

### Benign essential tremor

This is usually a familial (autosomal dominant) tremor of the arms and head (titubation) which occurs most frequently in elderly people. Unlike the tremor of Parkinson's disease it is not usually present at rest, but is most obvious when the hands adopt a posture such as holding a glass or a spoon (p. 759). It is made worse by anxiety and improved by alcohol, propranolol, primadone (an anticonvulsant), and mirtazapine (an antidepressant).

### Chorea

Chorea is a continuous flow of jerky, quasi-purposive movements, flitting from one part of the body to another. They may interfere with voluntary movements but cease during sleep. The causes of chorea are listed in Table 17.13.

### Huntington's disease

This is a rare autosomal dominant condition with full penetrance. There is a relentlessly progressive course with chorea and personality change preceding dementia and death. Symptoms usually begin in middle age. Expansion of CAG repeats in the Huntington's disease gene on chromosome 4 leads to production of mutant *huntingtin* protein. It is not known how the mutant

**Table 17.13** Causes of chorea

|   |
|---|
| Huntington's disease  |
| Dentato-rubro-pallido-luysian atrophy   |
| Sydenham's chorea   |
| Benign hereditary chorea  |
| Drug induced: phenytoin, levodopa, alcohol  |
| Thyrotoxicosis  |
| Pregnancy and the oral contraceptive pill   |
| Hypoparathyroidism  |
| Systemic lupus erythematosus  |
| Polycythaemia vera  |
| Stroke (basal ganglia)  |
| Other CNS disease: tumour, trauma subdural haematoma, following carbon monoxide poisoning, Wilson's disease |

protein causes disease. There is loss of neurones within the basal ganglia, leading to depletion of GABA ( $\gamma$ -aminobutyric acid) and acetylcholine but sparing dopamine. No treatment arrests the disease, and the management is symptomatic treatment of chorea and genetic counselling of family members.

### Hemiballismus

Hemiballismus (also called hemiballism) describes violent swinging movements of one side of the body, usually caused by infarction or haemorrhage in the contralateral subthalamic nucleus.

### Myoclonus

Myoclonus is the sudden, involuntary jerking of a single muscle or group of muscles. The most common example is benign essential myoclonus, which is the sudden jerking of a limb or the body on falling asleep. Myoclonus also occurs with epilepsy and some encephalopathies.

### Tics

Tics are brief, repeated stereotypical movements, usually involving the face and shoulders. Unlike other involuntary movements it is usually possible for the patient to control tics.

### Dystonias

Dystonias are prolonged spasms of muscle contraction. They occur as a symptom of neurological disease, e.g. Wilson's disease, but are usually focal, of unknown cause and occur without other neurological problems, e.g. blepharospasm (spasms of forced blinking) or spasmodic torticollis (the head is turned and held to one side or drawn backwards or forwards). Targeted injection of minute amounts of botulinum toxin (which inhibits the release of



acetylcholine from nerve endings) into the muscle provides temporary relief. Acute dystonic reactions are seen with phenothiazines, butyrophenones and metoclopramide, and can occur after a single dose of the drug. Spasmodic torticollis, trismus and oculogyric crises (i.e. episodes of sustained upward gaze) may occur. Acute dystonias respond promptly to an anticholinergic drug administered by intravenous or intramuscular injection, e.g. benztropine (1–2 mg) or procyclidine (5 mg).

## Multiple sclerosis (MS)

MS is a chronic debilitating autoimmune disorder of the central nervous system in which there are multiple plaques of demyelination within the brain and spinal cord. These plaques are disseminated both in time and place, hence the old name 'disseminated sclerosis'.

### Epidemiology

MS typically begins in early adulthood and the disease is more common in women. The prevalence varies widely (60 per 10 000 in England); it is rare in tropical countries.

### Aetiology

Although the precise mechanism is unknown, there is an inflammatory process in the white matter of the brain and spinal cord mediated by B cells and CD4 T cells. It is thought that exposure to a specific infectious agent (Epstein–Barr virus, EBV) in childhood may predispose to the later development of MS in a genetically susceptible host. Antibodies produced by B cells and T cells directed against EBV nuclear antigens may be redirected to attack CNS myelin because of molecular mimicry.

### Pathology

Inflammation, demyelination and axonal loss are the major feature of the MS plaque and cause the clinical manifestations. Plaques are perivenular and have a predilection for distinct CNS sites: optic nerves, periventricular white matter, brainstem and its cerebellar connections, and the cervical spinal cord (corticospinal tracts and posterior columns). The peripheral nerves are never affected.

### Clinical features

The typical patient presents as a young adult (onset of MS rare before puberty or after 60 years) with two or more clinically distinct episodes of CNS dysfunction followed by a remission during which symptoms and signs resolve to some extent within weeks. The regression of symptoms is attributed to the resolution of inflammatory oedema and to partial remyelination. Three

characteristic common presentations of relapsing and remitting MS are optic neuropathy, brainstem demyelination and spinal cord lesions.

**Optic neuropathy** Inflammation of the optic nerve produces blurred vision and unilateral eye pain. A lesion in the optic nerve head produces disc swelling (optic neuritis) and pallor (optic atrophy) following the attack. When inflammation occurs in the optic nerve further away from the eye (retrobulbar neuritis) examination of the fundus is normal.

**Brainstem demyelination** produces diplopia, vertigo, dysphagia and nystagmus.

**Spinal cord lesions** Sensory symptoms including numbness and pins and needles are common in MS and reflect spinothalamic and posterior column lesions. Spastic paraparesis is the result of plaques of demyelination in the cervical or thoracic cord.

In some patients there will only be one or two attacks with little residual neurological deficit, and they remain very well for years. At the other extreme, an increasing neurological deficit accumulates and spastic tetraparesis, ataxia, brainstem signs, blindness, incontinence and dementia characterize the final stages. Death follows from recurrent urinary tract infection, uraemia and bronchopneumonia.

Other less common clinical patterns of MS are primary progressive (disease progression from the onset with only occasional and minor improvements), secondary progressive (initial relapsing/remitting course followed by progression) and, occasionally, a fulminating course over some months (fulminant MS).

## Differential diagnosis

Initially, individual plaques (in the optic nerve, brainstem or cord) may cause diagnostic difficulty and must be distinguished from inflammatory (Behçet's disease, systemic lupus erythematosus, sarcoid), mass or vascular lesions. A single lesion in the cord may produce paraparesis and a sensory level and mechanical cord compression (p. 779) must be excluded by MRI. In young patients with a relapsing and remitting course the diagnosis is straightforward, as few other diseases produce this clinical picture.

## Investigations

- MRI of brain and spinal cord is the definitive investigation and shows plaques particularly in the periventricular area and brainstem. Lesions are rarely visible on CT.
- Electrophysiological tests. Visual, auditory and somatosensory evoked potentials may be prolonged, even in the absence of any past or present visual symptoms.
- CSF examination is usually unnecessary as the diagnosis is made with MRI or evoked potentials and a compatible clinical picture. Protein concentration and cell count (5–60 mononuclear cells/mm<sup>3</sup>) are raised. CSF

electrophoresis shows oligoclonal IgG bands in most cases but these are not specific.

## Management

- Short courses of steroids, e.g. i.v. methylprednisolone 1000 mg/day for 3 days, is used in relapses and may reduce severity. However, they do not influence long-term outlook.
- Subcutaneous administration of  $\beta$ -interferon reduces the relapse rate by one-third in relapsing/remitting disease and may delay the time to severe debility. Treatment is prolonged, expensive and associated with side-effects, such as 'flu-like symptoms'.
- Glatiramer acetate is antigenically similar to myelin basic protein and competes with various myelin antigens for their presentation to T cells. It has similar efficacy to interferons and is given by subcutaneous injection.
- Natalizumab and mitoxantrone are reserved as second line therapy due to side-effects (progressive multifocal leucoencephalopathy and cardiac toxicity respectively).
- Physiotherapy and occupational therapy maintain the mobility of joints, and muscle relaxants (e.g. baclofen, dantrolene and benzodiazepines) reduce the discomfort and pain of spasticity. Multidisciplinary team liaison between patient, carers, medical practitioners and therapists is essential for any patient with chronic disabling disease. Urinary catheterization is eventually needed for those with bladder involvement. The Multiple Sclerosis Society provides information and support for patients and relatives (<http://www.mssociety.org.uk>).

## NERVOUS SYSTEM INFECTION AND INFLAMMATION

### Meningitis<sup>nd</sup>

Meningitis (inflammation of the meninges) can be caused by infection, intrathecal drug, malignant cells and blood (following subarachnoid haemorrhage). The term is, however, usually reserved for inflammation caused by infective agents (Table 17.14). Microorganisms reach the meninges either by direct extension from the ears, nasopharynx, cranial injury or congenital meningeal defect, or by bloodstream spread. Immunocompromised patients (HIV, cytotoxic drug therapy) are at risk of infection by unusual organisms.

### Clinical features

**Acute bacterial meningitis** Headache, neck stiffness and fever develop over minutes to hours. Photophobia (intolerance of light) and vomiting are often present. Kernig's sign (inability to allow full extension of the knee when the hip is flexed 90°) is usually present. Consciousness is usually not

**Table 17.14** Infective causes of meningitis in the UK

| Bacteria  |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Neisseria meningitidis</i> *   |  |
| <i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> *   |  |
| <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>  |  |
| Streptococcus group B   |  |
| <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>   |  |
| Gram-negative bacilli, e.g. <i>E. coli</i>  |  |
| <i>Mycobacterium tuberculosis</i> †   |  |
| <i>Treponema pallidum</i> †   |  |
| Viruses   |  |
| Enterovirus (ECHO, Coxsackie)   |  |
| Poliomyelitis   |  |
| Mumps   |  |
| Herpes simplex virus  |  |
| HIV   |  |
| Epstein–Barr virus  |  |
| Fungi†  |  |
| <i>Cryptococcus neoformans</i>  |  |
| <i>Candida albicans</i>   |  |
| <i>Coccidioides immitis</i>   |  |
| <i>Histoplasma capsulatum</i>   |  |
| *account for most cases of acute bacterial meningitis outside of the neonatal period. |  |
| †may cause chronic meningitis with signs and symptoms for longer than 4 weeks.        |  |

impaired, although the patient may be delirious with a high fever. Papilloedema may occur. Progressive drowsiness, lateralizing signs and cranial nerve lesions indicates the existence of a complication, e.g. venous sinus thrombosis, severe cerebral oedema or cerebral abscess. In meningococcal septicaemia there is a non-blanching petechial and purpuric skin rash and signs of shock.

**Viral meningitis** is usually a benign self-limiting condition lasting for about 4–10 days. There are no serious sequelae.

**Chronic meningitis** presents with a long history and vague symptoms of headache, lassitude, anorexia and vomiting. Signs of meningism may be absent or appear late in the course of the disease.

## Differential diagnosis

Subarachnoid haemorrhage, migraine, viral encephalitis and cerebral malaria can mimic meningitis.

## Management

Suspected bacterial meningitis is a medical emergency with a high mortality rate and requires urgent investigation and treatment (Emergency Box 17.3).

## Notification

All cases of meningitis must (by law in the UK) be notified to the local Public Health Authority; this allows contact tracing and provides data for epidemiological studies.



### Emergency Box 17.3

#### Investigation and treatment of suspected bacterial meningitis

**Note:** A non-blanching petechial or purpuric skin rash is indicative of meningococcal infection. It is an indication for immediate (before hospital transfer) treatment with benzylpenicillin, 1200 mg by slow i.v. or i.m. injection or cefotaxime 1 g i.v. Lumbar puncture should not be performed if meningococcal sepsis is suspected because coning of the cerebellar tonsils may follow – the organism is confirmed by blood culture.

#### Investigations

- *Head CT scan* should be performed if there is any suspicion of an intracranial mass lesion such as focal neurological signs, papilloedema, loss of consciousness or seizure.
- *Lumbar puncture (LP)*. Urgent CSF microscopy, white cell count and differential, and analysis for protein and glucose concentration (Table 17.15). Auramine stain (tuberculous) and Indian ink stain (cryptococcal infection) in immunocompromised or other at-risk individual.
- *Other*. Blood cultures, blood glucose, chest X-ray, viral and syphilis serology.

#### Treatment

**Note:** Antimicrobial therapy should not be delayed if there is a contraindication or inability to perform immediate LP.

- Close liaison between clinician and microbiologist is essential
- Cefotaxime 2 g 6-hourly i.v. for the initial treatment of bacterial meningitis. Add ampicillin 2 g 4-hourly or co-trimoxazole if risk of *Listeria* (elderly, immunosuppressed)
- Subsequent treatment given depending on results of Gram stain and culture, and antibiotic sensitivities of the organism
- Intravenous fluids and inotropes are given if there is also septicaemia (p. 577)
- Tuberculous meningitis is treated for at least 9 months (p. 544).

**Table 17.15** Typical changes in the CSF in viral, bacterial and TB meningitis

|                                   | Normal  | Bacterial       | Viral        | Tuberculous    |
|-----------------------------------|---------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Appearance                        | Clear   | Turbid/purulent | Clear/turbid | Turbid/viscous |
| Mononuclear cells/mm <sup>3</sup> | <5      | <50             | 10–100       | 100–300        |
| Polymorphs/mm <sup>3</sup>        | Nil     | 200–3000        | Nil          | 0–200          |
| Protein (g/L)                     | 0.2–0.4 | 0.5–2.0         | 0.4–0.8      | 0.5–3.0        |
| Glucose (% blood glucose)         | >50     | <50             | >50          | <50            |

*NB: Malignant meningitis, e.g. with lymphoma, may give similar changes to TB*

## Meningococcal prophylaxis

Oral rifampicin or ciprofloxacin is given to eradicate nasopharyngeal carriage of the organism. It is given to patients and those who have had prolonged close contact in a household setting during the 7 days before onset of the illness. A vaccine for meningococcal group C and *Haemophilus influenzae* is part of routine childhood UK immunization.

## Encephalitis

Encephalitis is inflammation of the brain parenchyma. Unlike meningitis, cerebral function is usually abnormal with altered mental status, motor and sensory deficits. It is caused by a wide variety of viruses and may also occur in bacterial and other infections. In certain groups (e.g. men who have sex with men, intravenous drug users), HIV infection and opportunistic organisms (e.g. *Toxoplasma gondii* in patients with full-blown AIDS) are causes.

## Acute viral encephalitis

A viral aetiology is often presumed, although not confirmed serologically or by culture. In the UK the common organisms are herpes simplex viruses, ECHO, Coxsackie and mumps. Epidemic and endemic viral encephalitides occur world-wide, e.g. Japanese encephalitis (arbovirus) in South-East Asia, West Nile encephalitis in Egypt and Sudan. Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is caused by the TBE virus, a member of the Flaviviridae, and exists in two major forms: Central European and Far Eastern. An inactivated vaccine is available for travellers spending time in endemic areas.

## Clinical features

Many of these infections cause a mild self-limiting illness with fever, headache and drowsiness. Less commonly the illness is severe, with focal signs (e.g. hemiparesis, dysphasia), seizures and coma. Death or brain injury follows; herpes simplex virus (HSV-1) accounts for many of these in the UK.

## Investigations

- CT and MR imaging shows areas of oedema often in the temporal lobes
- CSF analysis shows a moderate increase in mononuclear cells (5–500 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>). Protein may also be increased
- Viral serology of blood and CSF may identify the causative virus
- EEG often shows non-specific slow-wave activity.

## Treatment

Suspected herpes simplex encephalitis is immediately treated with intravenous aciclovir (10 mg/kg every 8 hours for 14–21 days). If the patient is in a coma the prognosis is poor, whether or not treatment is given.

## Brain and spinal abscesses

An intracranial abscess may develop in the epidural, subdural or intracerebral sites. Epidural abscesses are uncommon; subdural abscess presents similarly to intracerebral abscess.

## Cerebral abscess

Infection follows the direct spread of organisms from a parameningeal infective focus (e.g. paranasal sinuses, middle ear or skull fracture) or a distant source of infection via the bloodstream (lung, heart, abdomen). Frequently no cause is found. The most common organisms are *Streptococci anginosus*, *Bacteroides* species and staphylococci. Infection with tubercle bacilli may result in chronic caseating granulomata (tuberculomas) presenting as intracranial mass lesions.

## Clinical features

These include headache, focal neurological signs, seizures and sometimes evidence of raised intracranial pressure (p. 772) developing over days to weeks. Fever is usual but not invariable.

## Investigations

Contrast enhanced CT scan will show the abscess. Lumbar puncture is not performed because of the danger of coning in the presence of raised

intracranial pressure (p. 737). Aspiration with stereotactic guidance allows the organism to be identified.

## Management

Treatment is with a combination of intravenous antibiotics and sometimes surgical decompression.

### Spinal epidural abscess

Back pain and fever are followed by paraparesis and/or root lesions. The abscess is shown on MR imaging and treatment is with antibiotics (organism is usually *Staphylococcus aureus*) and surgical decompression.

### Neurosyphilis

Syphilis is described on page 43. Neurosyphilis occurs late in the course of untreated infection and is now rarely seen in the UK because of treatment at an earlier stage. The different clinical syndromes (Table 17.16) occur alone or in combination.

**Table 17.16** The clinical syndromes of neurosyphilis

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Asymptomatic neurosyphilis                       | Positive CSF serology without symptoms or signs   |
| Meningovascular syphilis<br>(3–4 years)          | Subacute meningitis with cranial nerve palsies and papilloedema<br>Gumma (an expanding intracranial mass) causes raised intracranial pressure and focal deficits<br>Paraparesis caused by spinal meningovascularitis                              |
| General paralysis of the insane<br>(10–15 years) | Progressive dementia<br>Brisk reflexes<br>Extensor plantar responses<br>Tremor  |
| Tabes dorsalis<br>(10–35 years)                  | Demyelination in the dorsal roots causes lightning pains (short, sharp, stabbing) in the legs<br>Ataxia, loss of reflexes and sensory loss<br>Neuropathic joints (Charcot's joints)<br>Argyll Robertson pupils (p. 730), ptosis and optic atrophy |

*The numbers in brackets are the years after the primary infection.*



## Management

Treatment is with benzylpenicillin 1 g daily i.m. for 10 days, which may arrest (but not reverse) the neurological disease.

### Transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (Creutzfeldt–Jakob disease (CJD))

There is progressive dementia, usually developing after 50 years of age, characterized pathologically by spongiform changes in the brain. It is caused by prions (a proteinaceous infectious particle) and the pathology is similar to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) of cattle. Prions are resistant to many of the usual processes that destroy proteins. CJD occurs as a sporadic form or an iatrogenic form as a result of contaminated material such as corneal grafts or human growth hormone. There is no treatment and death usually occurs within 6 months of onset.

Variant CJD (vCJD) presents with neuropsychiatric symptoms, followed by ataxia and dementia, and affects a younger age group. Diagnosis can be confirmed by tonsillar biopsy and CSF gel electrophoresis. vCJD and BSE are caused by the same prion strain suggesting transmission from BSE-infected cattle to the human food chain.

## BRAIN TUMOURS

Primary intracranial tumours account for 10% of all neoplasms, and in the UK about half of all intracranial tumours are metastatic. Primary intracranial tumours are derived from the skull itself, or from any of the structures lying within it, or from their tissue precursors. They may be malignant on histological investigation but rarely metastasize outside the brain. The most common intracranial tumours occurring in adults are listed in Table 17.17. Pituitary tumours are discussed separately on page 611.

### Clinical features

The clinical features of a cerebral tumour are the result of the following:

- Progressive focal neurological deficit
- Raised intracranial pressure
- Focal or generalized epilepsy.

**Neurological deficit** is the result of a mass effect of the tumour and surrounding cerebral oedema. The deficit depends on the site of the tumour, e.g. a frontal lobe tumour will initially cause personality change, apathy and intellectual deterioration. Subsequent involvement of the frontal speech area and motor cortex produces expressive aphasia and hemiparesis. Rapidly growing tumours destroy cerebral tissue and loss of function is an early feature.

**Table 17.17** Common brain tumours

| Tumour   | Relative frequency (%) |
|--|------------------------|
| <b>Primary malignant</b>   | 35                     |
| Glioma   |                        |
| Embryonal tumours, e.g. medulloblastoma  |                        |
| Lymphoma   |                        |
| <b>Benign</b>  | 15                     |
| Meningioma   |                        |
| Neurofibroma   |                        |
| <b>Metastases</b>  | 50                     |
| Bronchus   |                        |
| Breast   |                        |
| Stomach  |                        |
| Prostate   |                        |
| Thyroid  |                        |
| Kidney   |                        |
| <i>Gliomas, meningiomas and embryonal tumours account for 95% of primary brain tumours</i> |                        |

**Raised intracranial pressure** produces headache, vomiting and papilloedema. The headache typically changes with posture and is made worse by coughing, sneezing, bending and straining.

As the tumour grows there is downward displacement of the brain and pressure on the brainstem, causing drowsiness, which progresses eventually to respiratory depression, bradycardia, coma and death. Distortion of normal structures at a distance from the growing tumour leads to focal neurological signs (false localizing signs). The most common are a third and sixth cranial nerve palsy (p. 731) resulting from stretching of the nerves by downward displacement of the temporal lobes.

**Epilepsy** Fits may be generalized or partial in nature. The site of origin of a partial seizure is frequently of value in localization.

## Differential diagnosis

The main differential is from other intracranial mass lesions (cerebral abscess, tuberculoma, subdural haematoma and intracranial haematoma) and a stroke, which may have an identical clinical presentation. Benign (idiopathic) intracranial hypertension presents with headache and papilloedema in young obese females. Neuroimaging is normal but at lumbar puncture there is raised CSF pressure.

## Investigations

- *Imaging.* CT and MRI are useful in detecting brain tumours. MRI is of particular value in investigation of tumours of the posterior fossa and brainstem. MR angiography is sometimes necessary to define the site or blood supply of a mass, particularly if surgery is planned. Positron emission tomography (PET) is sometimes helpful to locate an occult primary tumour with metastasis. Plain skull X-rays have no value in brain tumour diagnosis.
- *Other investigations.* These include routine tests, e.g. chest X-ray if metastatic disease is suspected. Lumbar puncture and examination of the CSF is contraindicated with the possibility of an intracranial mass lesion because of danger of immediate herniation of the cerebellar tonsils, impaction within the foramen magnum and compression of the brainstem ('coning').

## Management

- *Surgery.* Surgical exploration, and either biopsy or removal of the mass, is usually carried out to ascertain its nature. Some benign tumours, e.g. meningiomas, can be removed in their entirety without unacceptable damage to surrounding structures.
- *Radiotherapy* is given for gliomas and radiosensitive metastases and improves survival slightly.
- *Medical treatment.* Cerebral oedema surrounding a tumour is rapidly reduced by corticosteroids; i.v. or oral dexamethasone. Epilepsy is treated with anti-convulsants. Chemotherapy has little real value in the majority of primary or secondary brain tumours. The prognosis is very poor in patients with malignant tumours, with only 50% survival at 2 years for high-grade gliomas.

## HYDROCEPHALUS

This is an excessive amount of CSF within the cranium. CSF is produced in the cerebral ventricles and normally flows downward into the central canal of the spinal cord and then out into the subarachnoid space, from where it is reabsorbed. Hydrocephalus occurs when there is obstruction to the outflow of CSF; rarely it is the result of increased production of CSF.

## Aetiology

In children, hydrocephalus may be caused by a congenital malformation of the brain (e.g. Arnold–Chiari malformation), meningitis or haemorrhage causing obstruction to the flow of CSF. In adults hydrocephalus is caused by:

- A late presentation of a congenital malformation
- Cerebral tumours in the posterior fossa or brainstem which obstruct the aqueduct or fourth-ventricle outflow
- Subarachnoid haemorrhage, head injury and meningitis
- Normal-pressure hydrocephalus, in which there is dilatation of the cerebral ventricles without signs of raised intracranial pressure. It presents in elderly people with dementia, urinary incontinence and ataxia.

## Clinical features

There is headache, vomiting and papilloedema caused by raised intracranial pressure. There may be ataxia and bilateral pyramidal signs.

## Management

Treatment is by the surgical insertion of a shunt between the ventricles and the right atrium or peritoneum (ventriculoatrial or ventriculoperitoneal).

## HEADACHE, MIGRAINE AND FACIAL PAIN

Headache is common and the history and examination is the key to diagnosis. Neuroimaging is not indicated in patients who have a clear history of migraine and have no 'red flag' symptoms or signs (Table 17.2).

### Tension headache

Most chronic daily and recurrent headaches are tension headaches. They are thought to be generated by neurovascular irritation and referred to scalp muscles and soft tissues. There is a feeling of pressure or tightness all around the head and there are no associated features of classic migraine (aura, nausea, photophobia). Treatment consists of explanation and reassurance, analgesic withdrawal (to avoid analgesic overuse headache) and tricyclic antidepressants in some cases.

### Migraine

Migraine is recurrent headache associated with visual and gastrointestinal disturbance. It is a common condition, occurs more frequently in women and onset is usually before 40 years of age. The diagnosis is clinical.

### Pathogenesis

Genetic and environmental factors play a role. Changes in brainstem blood flow lead to an unstable trigeminal nerve nucleus and nuclei in the basal thalamus. This results in release of vasoactive neuropeptides including calcitonin-gene-related peptide (CGRP) and substance P; this then results in

the process of neurogenic inflammation of which the two components are vasodilatation and plasma protein extravasation. Cortical spreading depression is a self-propagating wave of neuronal and glial depolarization that spreads across the cerebral cortex. It is proposed to cause the aura of migraine and lead to release of inflammatory mediators which impact on the trigeminal nerve nucleus. Precipitating factors include chocolate, cheese, too much or too little sleep, noise and irritating lights, and attacks premenstrually.

## Clinical features

Migraine is classified into three types:

- Migraine with aura (classic migraine)
- Migraine without aura (common migraine)
- Migraine variants (unilateral motor or sensory symptoms resembling a stroke).

The headache is characteristically unilateral, throbbing and builds up over minutes to hours. It may be associated with nausea, vomiting and photophobia. It may last for some days and is made worse by physical exertion. The patient is irritable and prefers the dark. Premonitory symptoms of fatigue, nausea, changes in mood and appetite may occur in the hours or days before the headache. Auras are related to depression of visual cortical function or retinal function and persist for minutes to hours before the headache. There may be scotomata, unilateral blindness, hemianopic field loss, flashes and fortification spectra. Other auras include aphasia, tingling, numbness and weakness of one side of the body. The most common way in which a migraine attack resolves is through sleep.

## Differential diagnosis

A sudden migraine headache may resemble meningitis or subarachnoid haemorrhage. The hemiplegic, visual and hemisensory symptoms must be distinguished from thromboembolic TIAs. In TIAs the maximum deficit is present immediately and headache is unusual (p. 744).

## Management

**General measures** Avoidance of dietary precipitating factors is rarely helpful. Women taking the oral contraceptive pill may be helped by stopping the drug or changing the brand. Hormonal contraceptives are contraindicated in migraine with focal aura.

### Treatment of the acute attack

- *Mild attacks.* Simple analgesia such as paracetamol (p. 317) or NSAIDs given at the start of the headache and combined with an antiemetic such as metoclopramide (p. 136).

- *Moderate/severe attacks.* Triptans, (e.g. sumatriptan, almotriptan, eletriptan, or rizatriptan) are serotonin (5-HT) 1B/1D agonists. They inhibit the release of vasoactive peptides, promote vasoconstriction and block pain pathways in the brainstem. They vary in their onset of action, recurrence rate and route of administration, e.g. tablets, subcutaneous injection, nasal spray. They are contraindicated when there is vascular disease and in migraine variants. Frequent use of medication for acute attacks may lead to analgesia overuse headache.

**Prophylaxis** is indicated in patients with frequent attacks (>2 per month) or whom respond poorly to treatment for acute attacks. Options are:

- Pizotifen (5-HT antagonist), initially 500 µg at night increased gradually to 1.5 mg at night or in 3 divided doses, maximum daily dose 4.5 g. Side-effects are weight gain and drowsiness (hence low starting dose at night)
- β-Blockers, e.g. propranolol 10 mg three times daily increased to 40–80 mg three times daily
- Amitriptyline 10 mg (or more) at night.

Sodium valproate, topiramate, verapamil, naproxen and methysergide are also used.

## Facial pain

The face is richly supplied with pain-sensitive structures – the teeth, gums, sinuses, temporomandibular joints, jaws and eyes – disease of which causes facial pain. Trigeminal (fifth) nerve lesions (p. 732) and trigeminal neuralgia (p. 733) also present with facial pain.

## Trigeminal autonomic cephalgias

These headaches are characterized by unilateral trigeminal distribution of pain in association with ipsilateral cranial autonomic features. The group comprises cluster headache, paroxysmal hemicrania, hemicrania continua, and short lasting unilateral neuralgiform headache attacks with conjunctival injection and tearing (SUNCT syndrome). They are rare other than cluster headache.

### Cluster headaches (migrainous neuralgia)

These are rapid onset, severe, short lived (1–2 hours), unilateral headaches with a clustering of painful attacks over weeks or months followed by periods of remission. Men are affected more commonly than women with a peak age of onset of 20–50 years. The pain often begins around the eye or temple. Autonomic features are lacrimation and redness of the eye, rhinorrhoea and Horner's syndrome. Treatment of an acute attack is with subcutaneous or nasal triptans or inhalation of 100% oxygen. Verapamil, topiramate, lithium

carbonate and/or a short course of steroids helps to bring about an end to a bout of clusters.

## Giant cell arteritis (cranial or temporal arteritis)

This is a granulomatous arteritis of unknown aetiology occurring chiefly in those over the age of 60 and affecting in particular the extradural arteries. Giant cell arteritis is closely related to polymyalgia rheumatica (p. 307) and this can occur in the same patient.

### Clinical features

There is headache, scalp tenderness (e.g. on combing the hair) and occasionally pain in the jaw and mouth which is characteristically worse on eating (jaw claudication). The superficial temporal artery may become tender, firm and pulseless. Blindness, caused by inflammation and occlusion of the ciliary and/or central retinal artery, occurs in 25% of untreated cases. Systemic features include weight loss, malaise and a low-grade fever.

### Investigations

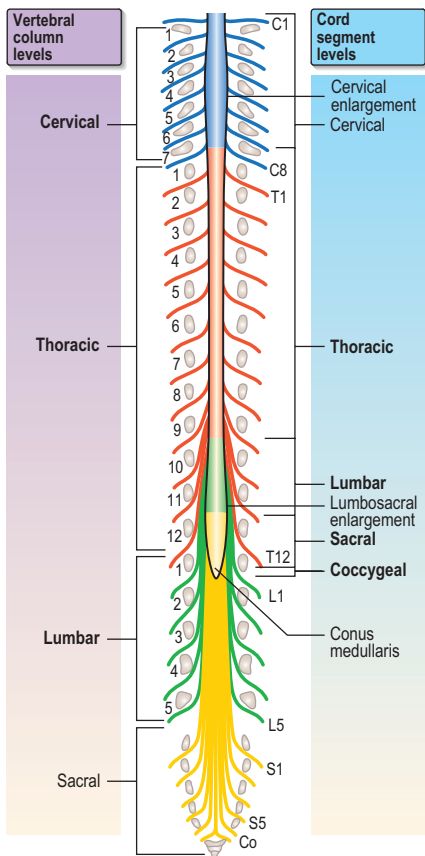
- ESR is always elevated  $>50$  mm/h
- Full blood count may show a normochromic, normocytic anaemia
- Histology. A temporal artery biopsy, which can be performed under local anaesthetic, usually confirms the diagnosis. However, the granulomatous changes may be patchy and therefore missed.

### Management

High doses of steroids (oral prednisolone, initially 60–100 mg daily) should be started *immediately* in a patient with typical features, and a temporal artery biopsy obtained as soon as possible (the histological changes remain for up to a week after starting treatment). The steroid dose is gradually reduced, guided by symptoms and the ESR. Long-term steroids may be needed because the risk of visual loss persists.

## SPINAL CORD DISEASE

The cord extends from C1 (its junction with the medulla) to the vertebral body of L1. The spinal canal below L1 is occupied by lumbar and sacral nerve roots, which group together to form the cauda equina and ultimately extend into the pelvis and thigh (Fig. 17.11). Paraplegia (weakness of both legs) is almost always caused by a spinal cord lesion, as opposed to hemiplegia (weakness of one side of the body), which is usually the result of a lesion in the brain.



**Fig. 17.11** The spinal cord and cauda equina. The bony vertebrae are indicated on the left-hand side (7 cervical, 12 thoracic, 5 lumbar and 5 sacral). The spinal cord extends from C1 (its junction with the medulla) to the vertebral body of L1. The spinal cord segments indicated on the right are not necessarily situated at the same vertebral levels as the bony vertebra. For instance the lumbar cord is situated between T9 and T11 vertebrae. A T8 vertebral injury will result in a T12 cord or neurological level (i.e. sensation is diminished below the T12 dermatome, and motor function is reduced in muscles innervated by T12 and below). The cord segmental levels are indicated for cervical (blue), thoracic (red), lumbar (green) and sacral (yellow). The spray of spinal roots below the conus is called the cauda equina and is damaged by lesions below the L2 vertebra.



## Spinal cord compression

This is a medical emergency.

### Clinical features

There is progressive weakness of the legs with upper motor neurone pattern (Table 17.4) and eventual paralysis. The onset may be acute (hours to days) or chronic (weeks to months), depending on the cause. The arms are affected if the lesion is above the thoracic spine. There is sensory loss below the level of the lesion. This is called the *sensory level* and is when sensation abruptly diminishes one to two spinal cord segments below the level of the actual anatomical level of spinal cord compression. Sometimes there is loss of sphincter control with urinary incontinence. There may be painless urinary retention and constipation in the later stages.

### Aetiology

The most common cause of acute spinal cord compression is a vertebral tumour (metastases from lung, breast, kidney, prostate or multiple myeloma (Table 17.18)). Spinal tuberculosis is a frequent cause in endemic areas (p. 541).

### Investigations

Urgent investigation is essential in a patient with suspected cord compression, especially with acute or subacute onset, because irreversible paraplegia may follow if the cord is not decompressed.

**Table 17.18** Causes of spinal cord compression

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Vertebral body neoplasms   | Metastases, e.g. from lung, breast, prostate                 |
|                            | Myeloma  |
|                            | Lymphoma   |
| Disc and vertebral lesions | Trauma   |
|                            | Chronic degenerative disease                                 |
| Inflammatory               | Epidural abscess   |
|                            | Tuberculosis (Pott's paraplegia)                             |
| Spinal cord neoplasms      | Primary cord neoplasm, e.g. glioma, neurofibroma             |
|                            | Metastases   |
| Rarities                   | Paget's disease, bone cysts, osteoporotic vertebral collapse |
|                            | Epidural haemorrhage, e.g. patients on warfarin              |

- MRI identifies the cause and site of cord compression
- X-ray of the spine may show degenerative bone disease and destruction of vertebrae by infection or neoplasm.

## Management

The treatment depends on the cause, but in most cases the initial treatment involves surgical decompression of the cord and stabilization of the spine. Dexamethasone (16 mg/day, p. 663) reduces oedema around the lesion and improves outcome in patients with cord compression due to malignancy.

## Differential diagnosis

The differential diagnosis is from intrinsic lesions of the cord causing paraparesis. Transverse myelitis (acute inflammation of the cord resulting from viral infection, syphilis or radiation therapy), anterior spinal artery occlusion and multiple sclerosis may present with a rapid onset of paraparesis. A more insidious onset of weakness occurs with motor neurone disease (in which there is no sensory deficit), subacute combined degeneration of the cord, and as a non-metastatic manifestation of malignancy. MRI should always be performed in a patient with a sensory or motor level. Rarely a parasagittal cortical lesion, e.g. meningioma, may cause paraplegia.

### Cauda equina lesion

Spinal damage at or distal to L1 (a common cause is lumbar disc prolapse at the L4/L5 and L5/S1 level) injures the cauda equina (p. 778). Cauda equina syndrome can present acutely or with a more insidious onset of typical signs and symptoms. Involvement of multiple sacral and lumbar nerve roots in the lumbar vertebral canal causes bladder (reduced desire to void progressing to painless urinary retention), and bowel dysfunction and perianal and perineal ('saddle') numbness. There may also be back pain, numbness and weakness in the legs with reduced reflexes. MRI is the imaging method of choice in patients with suspected cauda equina syndrome and surgical decompression if a potentially reversible cause is shown.

### Syringomyelia and syringobulbia

Fluid-filled cavities within the spinal cord (myelia) and brainstem (bulbia) are the essential features of these conditions.

## Aetiology

The most frequent cause is blockage of CSF flow from the fourth ventricle in association with an Arnold–Chiari malformation (congenital herniation of the cerebellar tonsils through the foramen magnum). The normal pulsatile CSF

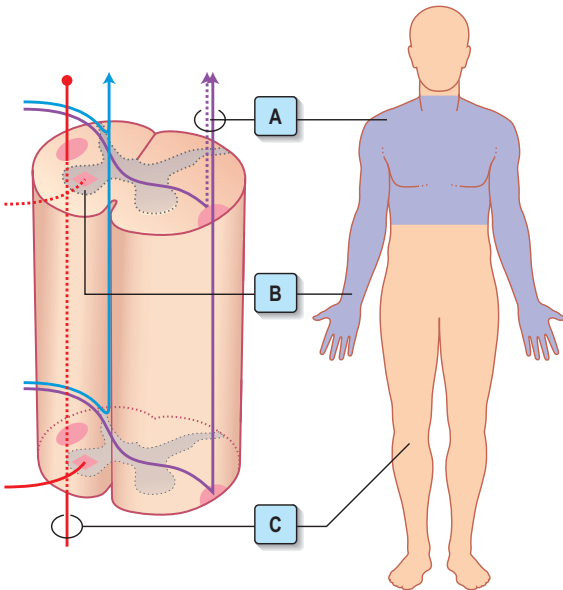
pressure waves are transmitted to the delicate tissues of the cervical cord and brainstem, with secondary cavity formation. Hydrocephalus may also occur as a result of disturbed CSF flow.

## Clinical features

Patients usually present in the third or fourth decade with pain and sensory loss (pain and temperature) in the upper limbs. The clinical features are demonstrated in Figure 17.12.

## Investigation

MRI is the investigation of choice and demonstrates the intrinsic cavities.



**Fig. 17.12** Production of physical signs in syringomyelia. Expanding cavities distend the cord. Pain and temperature (A) fibres crossing at that level are destroyed, but sensory fibres in the posterior columns (other sensory modalities) and those that enter the spinothalamic tract at a lower level are spared. Sensory loss is therefore 'dissociated' and confined to the upper trunk and limbs. Further extension damages the anterior horn cells (B), the pyramidal tracts (C) and the medulla, causing wasting in the hands, a spastic paraplegia, nystagmus and a bulbar palsy. (From Parsons M (1993) *A Colour Atlas of Clinical Neurology*. London, Mosby Wolfe.)

## Treatment

Surgical decompression of the foramen magnum sometimes slows deterioration.

### Friedreich's ataxia

This autosomal recessive disorder is the most common of the hereditary spinocerebellar degenerations. There is a progressive degeneration of the spinocerebellar tracts and cerebellum causing cerebellar ataxia, dysarthria and nystagmus. Degeneration of the corticospinal tracts causes weakness and an extensor plantar response. The tendon reflexes are absent as a result of peripheral nerve damage. Loss of the dorsal columns causes absent joint position and vibration sense. Other features are pes cavus, optic atrophy, cardiomyopathy, and death by middle age.

### Management of the paraplegic patient

The paraplegic patient requires skilled and prolonged nursing care. A pressure-relieving mattress and turning the patient every 2 hours helps to prevent pressure sores. Bladder catheterization (sometimes intermittent self-catheterization) prevents urinary stasis and infection. Patients may need manual evacuation of faeces. This may become unnecessary as reflex emptying of the bladder and rectum develops. Passive physiotherapy helps to prevent contractures in paralysed limbs. Severe spasticity may be helped by dantrolene sodium, baclofen or diazepam. Many patients graduate to a wheelchair and maintain some degree of independence.

## DEGENERATIVE NEURONAL DISEASES

### Motor neurone disease

There is relentless and unexplained destruction of upper motor neurones and anterior horn cells in the brain and spinal cord. Most patients die within 3 years from respiratory failure as a result of bulbar palsy and pneumonia. It presents in middle age and is more common in men. Most cases are sporadic with no family history but the rare familial cases may give clues to the pathophysiology. Mutations in the free radical scavenging enzyme, copper/zinc superoxide dismutase (SOD-1), are responsible for one familial form suggesting that oxidative stress and free radicals are implicated in the destruction of motor neurones.

### Clinical features

Four clinical patterns are seen at diagnosis. However, as the disease progresses most patients develop a mixed picture. There is no involvement

of the sensory system or motor nerves to the eyes and sphincters in any of the clinical types:

- *Progressive muscular atrophy* is a predominantly lower motor neurone lesion of the cord causing weakness, wasting and fasciculation (spontaneous, irregular and brief contractions of part of a muscle) in the hands and arms.
- *Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis* is a combination of disease of the lateral corticospinal tracts and anterior horn cells producing a progressive spastic tetraparesis or paraparesis with added lower motor neurone signs (wasting and fasciculation).
- *Progressive bulbar and pseudobulbar palsy* results from destruction of upper (pseudobulbar palsy) and lower (bulbar palsy) motor neurones in the lower cranial nerves. There is dysarthria, dysphagia with wasting, and fasciculation of the tongue.
- *Primary lateral sclerosis* is rare. There is progressive tetraparesis.

## Investigations

The diagnosis is clinical; fasciculation is characteristic. An EMG shows muscle denervation, but this is not a specific finding.

## Differential diagnosis

The differential diagnosis is a cervical spine lesion, which may present with upper and lower motor neurone signs in the arms and legs. It is often distinguished by the presence of sensory signs. Idiopathic multifocal motor neuropathy (Table 17.19) presents with weakness predominantly in the hands and profuse fasciculation.

## Management

Riluzole, a sodium-channel blocker that inhibits glutamate release, slows progression slightly. Ventilatory support and feeding via a PEG (p. 124) helps prolong survival for some months.

**Table 17.19** Causes of mononeuritis multiplex

|  |
|--|
| Diabetes mellitus  |
| Leprosy (the most common cause world-wide)                           |
| Vasculitis   |
| Sarcoidosis  |
| Amyloidosis  |
| Malignancy   |
| Neurofibromatosis  |
| HIV infection  |
| Guillain–Barré syndrome  |
| Idiopathic multifocal motor neuropathy (distal motor, unknown cause) |

## Spinal muscular atrophies

This is a group of rare disorders which destroy the anterior horn cells of the spinal cord. There is a slowly progressive, usually symmetrical wasting and weakness of the limbs.

## Dementia

Dementia describes progressive decline of cognitive function, i.e. loss of mind, usually affecting the cerebral cortex as a whole, though sometimes patchily. Consciousness is not, however, clouded. Dementia affects about 10% of those aged 65 years and over, and 20% of those over 80. The commonest causes are Alzheimer's disease, fronto-temporal dementia, vascular dementia and dementia with Lewy bodies (Table 17.20).

### Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's disease is a primary degenerative cerebral disease of unknown aetiology and accounting for over 65% of dementia in any age group. There are characteristic pathological features, which include neuronal reduction in several areas of the brain, neurofibrillary tangles, argentophile plaques, consisting largely of amyloid protein, and granulovacuolar bodies.

### Clinical features

There is an insidious onset with steady progression over years. Short-term memory loss is usually the most prominent early symptom, but subsequently there is slow disintegration of the personality and intellect, eventually affecting all aspects of cortical function. There is decline in language (difficulty in naming and in understanding what is being said), visuospatial skills, apraxia (impaired ability to carry out skilled motor tasks) and agnosia (failure to recognize objects, e.g. clothing, people, places).

**Table 17.20** Causes of dementia

|  |
|--|
| Alzheimer's disease  |
| Dementia with Lewy bodies                                    |
| Frontotemporal dementia                                      |
| Vascular dementia  |
| Vitamin deficiency: B <sub>12</sub> , thiamin                |
| Hypothyroidism   |
| Intracranial mass: subdural haematoma, hydrocephalus, tumour |
| Chronic traumatic encephalopathy, e.g. punch drunkenness     |
| Infections: neurosyphilis, Creutzfeldt–Jakob disease, HIV    |
| Huntington's disease   |
| Parkinson's disease  |

## Investigations

There is no single test that will make a diagnosis of dementia. Memory problems are not always due to dementia and alternative diagnoses which mimic dementia should be considered: delirium, depression, drugs, normal age-associated memory problems. The Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE) is commonly used to screen for cognitive function. A score of 25 or above out of 30 is considered normal, score of 18 to 24 indicates mild to moderate impairment and a score of 17 or below indicates serious impairment. The Abbreviated Mental Test Score is a quick and simple assessment of the mental state (Table 17.21). Exclusion of rare treatable causes of dementia (Table 17.20) should also be considered and blood taken for a full blood count, liver biochemistry, thyroid function tests and measurement of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> and folate. A brain CT scan should be performed in younger patients or those with an atypical presentation. A social and family history will help to assess how vulnerable the person is in the community and what plans for support will need to be made.

## Management

In most cases there is no specific therapy, although the associated anxiety and depression often need treatment. Attempts to therapeutically augment cholinergic activity have been based on the observations that there is impaired cortical cholinergic function as a result of reduced cerebral production of choline acetyl transferase and a decrease in acetylcholine synthesis. Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors (donepezil, rivastigmine and galantamine) increase cholinergic transmission by inhibiting cholinesterase at the synaptic cleft. They have a modest benefit and slow intellectual deterioration in

**Table 17.21** Abbreviated mental test score

1. Age
2. Time to nearest hour
3. Address for recall at the end of the test (house number and street name)
4. Year
5. Place – name of hospital
6. Recognition of two people (e.g. doctor, nurse)
7. Date of birth
8. Year of 1st World War
9. Name of present monarch
10. Count backwards 20 to 1

Address recall correct?

Each correct answer scores one mark.

*At the 7/8 cut off sensitivity is 70–80% and specificity is 70–90% for diagnosis of dementia.*

patients with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease. Patients should be managed in the community as much as possible. A whole range of supportive interventions for both patient and carers is needed. Home care, day care, respite care and sitter services are all needed at various points during the progression of the disease. At some point long-term institutional care in a residential or nursing home may be required.

## Prognosis

The typical course is one of progressive decline. The average survival is 8–10 years.

## Vascular (multi-infarct) dementia

This is the second most common cause of dementia with a stepwise deterioration with declines followed by short periods of stability. There is usually a history of transient ischaemic attacks, although the dementia may follow a succession of acute cerebrovascular accidents or, less commonly, a single major stroke. There may be other evidence of arteriopathy.

## Dementia with Lewy bodies

This is characterized by fluctuating cognition with pronounced variation in attention and alertness. Prominent or persistent memory loss may not occur in the early stages. Impairment in attention, frontal, subcortical and visuo-spatial ability is often prominent. Depression and sleep disorders occur. Recurrent formed visual hallucinations (e.g. strange faces, frightening creatures) are a feature. Parkinsonism (e.g. slowing, rigidity) is common, with repeated falls. Delusions and transient loss of consciousness occur. Cortical Lewy bodies are prominent at autopsy. These inclusions were first described in idiopathic Parkinson's disease, but are a hallmark of this clinical pattern of dementia. Neuroleptic drugs should not be used.

## DISEASES OF THE PERIPHERAL NERVES

Six principal mechanisms cause nerve malfunction: demyelination, axonal degeneration, e.g. due to a toxin, Wallerian degeneration following nerve section, compression, infarction (in arteritis) and infiltration by inflammatory cells, e.g. sarcoid.

## Mononeuropathies

Mononeuropathy is a process affecting a single nerve, and multiple mononeuropathy (or mononeuritis multiplex) is a process affecting several or multiple nerves. Mononeuropathy may be the result of acute compression, particularly where the nerves are exposed anatomically (e.g. the common peroneal nerve at the head of the fibula), or entrapment, where the nerve



passes through a relatively tight anatomical passage (e.g. the carpal tunnel). It may also be caused by direct damage, e.g. major trauma, surgery or penetrating injuries.

### Carpal tunnel syndrome

Carpal tunnel syndrome is the most common entrapment neuropathy. It results from pressure on the median nerve as it passes through the carpal tunnel.

### Aetiology

It is usually idiopathic but may be associated with hypothyroidism, diabetes mellitus, pregnancy, obesity, rheumatoid arthritis and acromegaly.

### Clinical features

The history is of pain and paraesthesiae in the hand, typically worse at night, when it may wake the patient. On examination there may be no physical signs; weakness and wasting of the thenar muscles and sensory loss of the palm and palmar aspects of the radial three and a half fingers. Tapping on the carpal tunnel may reproduce the pain (Tinel's sign).

### Management

Treatment with nocturnal splints or local steroid injections gives temporary relief. Surgical decompression is the definitive treatment unless the condition is likely to resolve (e.g. with pregnancy, obesity).

Compression neuropathies may also affect the ulnar nerve (at the elbow), the radial nerve (caused by pressure against the humerus) and the common peroneal nerve (resulting from pressure at the head of the fibula).

### Mononeuritis multiplex

Mononeuritis multiplex often indicates a systemic disorder (Table 17.19); treatment is that of the underlying disease. Acute presentation is most commonly due to vasculitis when prompt treatment with steroids may prevent irreversible nerve damage.

## Polyneuropathy

Polyneuropathy is an acute or chronic, diffuse, usually symmetrical, disease process and may involve motor, sensory and autonomic nerves, either alone or in combination. Sensory symptoms include numbness, tingling, 'pins and needles', pain in the extremities and unsteadiness on the feet. Numbness typically affects the distal arms and legs in a 'glove and stocking' distribution. Motor symptoms are usually those of weakness. Autonomic neuropathy causes postural hypotension, urinary retention, erectile

**Table 17.22** Varieties of polyneuropathy

|  |
|--|
| Guillain–Barré syndrome  |
| Chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy  |
| Diphtheritic polyneuropathy  |
| Idiopathic sensorimotor neuropathy   |
| Drugs: e.g. isoniazid, metronidazole, cisplatin, phenytoin   |
| Toxins: alcohol, lead, arsenic, thallium   |
| Metabolic: diabetes mellitus, uraemia, thyroid disease, porphyria, amyloidosis                             |
| Vitamin deficiency: B <sub>1</sub> (thiamin), B <sub>6</sub> (pyridoxine), nicotinic acid, B <sub>12</sub> |
| Hereditary sensorimotor neuropathy   |
| Neuropathy in cancer: paraneoplastic manifestation, myeloma  |
| Autonomic neuropathy   |
| HIV-associated neuropathy  |
| Neuropathy in systemic disease: SLE, PAN, Churg–Strauss, RA, sarcoidosis, GCA                              |
| Critical illness neuropathy – ITU patients with multiorgan failure   |

*SLE, systemic lupus erythematosus; PAN, polyarteritis nodosa; RA, rheumatoid arthritis; GCA, giant cell arteritis*

dysfunction, diarrhoea (or occasionally constipation), diminished sweating, impaired pupillary responses and cardiac arrhythmias. Many varieties of neuropathy affect autonomic function to some degree, but occasionally autonomic features predominate. This occurs in diabetes mellitus, amyloidosis and the Guillain–Barré syndrome.

A classification is given in Table 17.22. In Europe diabetes mellitus is the commonest cause. First-line investigations in a patient presenting with polyneuropathy include full blood count and erythrocyte sedimentation rate, serum vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, blood glucose, urea and electrolytes, liver biochemistry and sometimes nerve conduction studies (p. 738).

## Guillain–Barré syndrome (GBS)

GBS is the most common acute neuropathy and is usually an inflammatory demyelinating, but occasionally axonal, polyneuropathy. It can lead to life-threatening respiratory failure.

### Pathogenesis

GBS is usually triggered by an infection: *Campylobacter jejuni*, Epstein–Barr virus and cytomegalovirus have all been associated. It is thought that the infectious organism shares epitopes with an antigen in peripheral nerve tissue (ganglioside GM<sub>1</sub> and GQ1b) leading to autoantibody mediated nerve cell damage formation.

## Clinical features

There is progressive onset of limb weakness (usually symmetrical) that reaches its nadir within 4 weeks. Reflexes are lost early in the illness. There are often sensory symptoms, e.g. paraesthesias, but few sensory signs on examination. Disability ranges from mild to very severe, with involvement of the respiratory and facial muscles. Autonomic features, such as postural hypotension, cardiac arrhythmias, ileus and bladder atony, are sometimes seen. The Miller Fisher syndrome is a related variant that affects the cranial nerves to the eye muscles and is characterized by ophthalmoplegia and ataxia.

## Investigations

The diagnosis is established on clinical grounds and confirmed by nerve conduction studies showing slowing of motor conduction, prolonged distal motor latency and/or conduction block. CSF protein is non-specifically elevated, with a normal sugar and cell count. In the Miller Fisher syndrome antibodies against GQ1b have a sensitivity of 90%.

## Differential diagnosis

Other causes of neuromuscular paralysis (hypokalaemia, polymyositis, botulism, poliomyelitis) can usually be excluded on clinical grounds and investigation. MRI of the spine may be needed to exclude transverse myelitis or cord compression.

## Management

Vital capacity is monitored 4-hourly to recognize respiratory muscle weakness. A fall below 80% of predicted or 20 mL/kg is an indication for transfer to ITU and possible mechanical ventilation. There is ECG monitoring to document cardiac dysrhythmias associated with autonomic dysfunction.

Intravenous immunoglobulin (0.4g/kg body weight daily for 5 consecutive days) is the standard treatment. It reduces duration and severity of paralysis and has fewer side-effects than plasma exchange. Immunoglobulin is contraindicated in patients with IgA deficiency (measure serum levels before treatment) in whom it causes severe allergic reactions. Supportive treatment includes heparin to prevent thrombosis, physiotherapy to prevent contractures and nasogastric or PEG feeding for patients with swallowing problems. Visiting and counselling services are offered by past patients through the Guillain–Barré Syndrome Support Group (<http://www.gbs.org.uk>).

Recovery begins between several days and 6 weeks from the outset. Prolonged ventilation may be necessary. Improvement towards independent mobility is gradual over many months but may be incomplete. About 10% of patients die (respiratory failure, pulmonary emboli, or infection) and 20% have permanent neurological damage.

## Vitamin deficiency neuropathies

### Thiamin (vitamin B<sub>1</sub>)

Thiamin deficiency occurs in chronic alcohol-dependent patients (where little food is consumed), in starvation from any cause, and in beriberi (poorest areas of South East Asia where only polished rice is consumed). Presentation is with the Wernicke–Korsakoff syndrome (p. 604), polyneuropathy and cardiac failure (rarely seen in Western countries). Treatment is with thiamin (250 mg daily i.m. or i.v.) for 3 days. Anaphylaxis can occur with parenteral thiamin. Thiamin must always be given before intravenous glucose in these high-risk patients.

### Pyridoxine (vitamin E<sub>6</sub>)

Deficiency causes mainly a sensory neuropathy. It may be precipitated during isoniazid therapy (which complexes with pyridoxal phosphate) for tuberculosis in those who acetylate the drug slowly. Prophylactic pyridoxine (10 mg daily) is given with isoniazid.

### Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>

Deficiency causes a polyneuropathy and the syndrome of *subacute combined degeneration of the cord*. This comprises distal sensory loss (particularly the posterior column), absent ankle jerks (as a result of the neuropathy) and evidence of cord disease (exaggerated knee jerk reflexes, extensor plantar responses). Treatment is with intramuscular vitamin B<sub>12</sub> (p. 241), which reverses the peripheral nerve damage but has little effect on the CNS (cord and brain signs).

## Hereditary sensorimotor neuropathy

This is a large and complex group with variable genetic mutations. Charcot–Marie–Tooth disease, also called peroneal muscular atrophy, is the commonest with autosomal dominant inheritance in most cases. There is distal limb wasting and weakness that progress over many years, mostly in the legs, with variable loss of sensation and reflexes. In advanced cases the distal wasting below the knees is so marked that the legs resemble ‘inverted champagne bottles’.

## MUSCLE DISEASES

Weakness is the predominant feature of muscle disease. In contrast to weakness secondary to a neuropathy, reflexes and sensation are normal in muscle disease and wasting of muscle occurs late. Muscle disease is acquired or congenital (Table 17.23). Investigation of suspected muscle disease is discussed on page 738.

**Table 17.23** Muscle disease: classification

| Acquired   | Genetic   |
|--|---|
| Inflammatory<br>Polymyositis/Dermatomyositis<br>Inclusion body myositis<br>Viral, bacterial, parasitic infection<br>Sarcoidosis  | Dystrophic<br>Duchenne<br>Faciocapulohumeral<br>Limb girdle and others  |
| Endocrine*<br>Corticosteroids/Cushing's syndrome<br>Thyroid disease<br>Hypocalcaemia<br>Osteomalacia<br>Hypokalaemia<br>Alcohol excess<br>Drugs (diamorphine, amphetamine, statin) | Myotonic<br>Myotonic dystrophy<br>Myotonia congenital<br>Channelopathies<br>Hypokalaemic periodic paralysis<br>Hyperkalaemic periodic paralysis<br>Normokalaemic periodic paralysis         |
| Myasthenic<br>Myasthenia gravis<br>Lambert–Eaton myasthenic myopathic syndrome (LEMS)  | Metabolic (all rare)<br>Myophosphorylase deficiency (McArdle's syndrome)<br>Other defects of glycogen and fatty acid metabolism<br>Mitochondrial disease<br>Malignant hyperpyrexia (p. 661) |

## Acquired muscle disease

Polymyositis and dermatomyositis are discussed on page 305. Inclusion body myositis is a rare idiopathic inflammatory myopathy occurring in men over 50 years. There is pharyngeal muscle weakness and slowly progressive weakness of the distal muscles. There is no specific treatment. Muscle disease associated with drugs, toxins and endocrine disease usually produces weakness of the limb girdles (proximal myopathy). Typically the patient is unable to rise from a seated position without the use of their arms.

## Myasthenia gravis (MG)

MG is characterized by weakness and fatigability of ocular, bulbar and proximal limb muscles. The heart is not affected. It can present at any age but peaks occur in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> decade. It is twice as common in women as in men.

## Aetiology

In most cases, autoantibodies to acetylcholine receptors (anti-AChR antibodies) at the postsynaptic membrane of the neuro-muscular junction cause receptor loss. Myasthenia gravis is associated with thymic hyperplasia in about 70% of patients under 40 years of age, and in about 10% a thymic tumour is found.

## Clinical features

Presentation is usually with fatigability of muscle on sustained or repeated activity that improves after rest. The ocular muscles are the first to be involved in about 65% of patients resulting in ptosis that is often partial or unilateral and improves after sleep or with the application of an ice pack on the lid (specific to MG). There is extraocular progression of weakness usually from top down leading to difficulty in talking, chewing, swallowing and respiratory difficulties. Fatigue can be demonstrated by ptosis on sustained upward gaze or asking the patient to sit with the arms outstretched and looking for a slow downward drift.

## Investigations

- Anti-AChR antibodies are specific for MG and are found in the serum in 90% of cases of generalized MG but in less than 30% of pure ocular disease. Antibodies against a muscle-specific receptor tyrosine kinase (anti-MuSK antibodies) are found in Anti-AChR negative disease.
- Nerve stimulation tests show a characteristic decrement in evoked potential following stimulation of the motor nerve.
- Mediastinal imaging with CT or MRI to look for a thymoma.
- The Tensilon test (positive if intravenous injection of edrophonium, an anticholinesterase, results in rapid temporary improvement in weakness) is seldom required.

## Differential diagnosis

Thyroid ophthalmopathy, myotonic dystrophy and brainstem cranial nerve lesions present with ocular and/or bulbar symptoms. Botulism causes rapid onset of muscle weakness, often with pupillary paralysis and there is a history of ingestion of contaminated food. Generalized muscle weakness occurs in motor neurone disease (differs in involvement of upper and lower motor neurones), Lambert–Eaton myasthenic myopathic syndrome is due to a presynaptic defect on the neuromuscular junction in patients with small cell lung cancer. Limb muscle weakness is the usual presenting symptom, exercise improves symptoms and reflexes are decreased or absent.

## Management

**Anticholinesterases** (e.g. oral pyridostigmine: starting dose 60 mg three times a day and then titrated according to the response) increase availability of acetylcholine at the receptor and are the mainstay of treatment. Excessive treatment may cause a 'cholinergic crisis' with worsening weakness, hyper-salivation, abdominal pain and diarrhoea. However, weakness is more often due to myasthenia unless high doses of pyridostigmine are used (>360 mg per day).

**Immunosuppressant drugs** are used in patients who do not respond to pyridostigmine or who relapse on treatment. Corticosteroids produce an improvement in 70% of cases. Azathioprine, mycophenolate and other immunosuppressants are also used.

**Plasmapheresis and intravenous immunoglobulin** have rapid onset and transient benefit and are used occasionally in myasthenic crisis (life-threatening condition with weakness of respiratory and bulbar muscles and may be drug induced, e.g. aminoglycosides,  $\beta$ -blockers) or as a bridge to other therapies (thymectomy or immunosuppressants).

**Thymectomy** is performed in patients with a thymoma (because of the potential for malignancy) and in selected patients without a thymoma who are most likely to benefit (<50 years, + ve anti-AChR antibodies) and enter a remission without medication.

## Muscular dystrophies

This is an inherited group of progressive myopathic disorders resulting from defects in a number of genes needed for normal muscle function. The Duchenne and Becker muscular dystrophies are inherited as X-linked recessive traits caused by a mutation in the dystrophin gene on chromosome 21. Patients with Duchenne muscular dystrophy present in early childhood with weakness in the proximal muscles of the leg. There is progression to other muscle groups with severe disability and death in the late teens. There is no curative treatment. Patients with Becker muscle dystrophy present later and the degree of clinical involvement is milder. Other dystrophies present later in life and are summarized in Table 17.24.

## MYOTONIAS

These conditions are characterized by myotonia (delayed muscle relaxation after contraction) which can be demonstrated by difficulty releasing the grasp after shaking hands. Patients tolerate general anaesthetics poorly. Dystrophia myotonica and myotonia congenita are the most common and both are autosomal dominant conditions.

**Table 17.24** Limb girdle and facioscapulohumeral dystrophies

|                   | Limb girdle                         | Facioscapulohumeral            |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Inheritance       | Autosomal, various                  | Dominant, usually              |
| Onset             | 10–20 years                         | 10–40 years                    |
| Muscles affected  | Shoulders, pelvic girdle            | Face, shoulders, pelvic girdle |
| Progress          | Severe disability in<br>20–25 years | Normal life expectancy         |
| Pseudohypertrophy | Rare                                | Very rare                      |

## Dystrophia myotonica

There is progressive distal muscle weakness with myotonia, ptosis, facial muscle weakness and wasting. Other features commonly present are cataracts, frontal baldness, cardiomyopathy mild mental handicap, glucose intolerance and hypogonadism. Phenytoin or procainamide sometimes helps the myotonia.

## Myotonia congenita

There is mild isolated myotonia often accentuated by rest and cold. It becomes evident in childhood and persists throughout life.

## DELIRIUM

### Delirium (toxic confusional state)

Delirium is an acute or subacute condition in which impairment of consciousness is accompanied by abnormalities of perception and mood. Impairment of consciousness can vary in severity and often fluctuates (compare with dementia). Confusion is usually worse at night and may be accompanied by hallucinations, delusions, restlessness and aggression. Many diseases (Table 17.25) can be accompanied by delirium, particularly in the elderly. Infection and drugs are the most common causes.

## Management

Investigation and treatment of the underlying disease should be undertaken. General measures include withdrawing all drugs where possible, rehydration, and adequate pain relief and sedation. The patient should be nursed in a quiet area of the ward. Sedation should only be used if the patient is at risk of self-injury or aggressive behaviour interferes with management. Benzodiazepines are usually the drugs of choice, although in severe delirium



**Table 17.25** Causes of delirium

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Systemic infection      |  |
| Drugs                   | Tricyclic antidepressants                            |
|                         | Benzodiazepines                                      |
|                         | Opiates  |
|                         | Anticonvulsants                                      |
| Drug/alcohol withdrawal |  |
| Metabolic disturbance   | Hepatic failure                                      |
|                         | Renal failure  |
|                         | Disorders of electrolyte balance                     |
|                         | Hypoxia  |
|                         | Hypoglycaemia  |
| Vitamin deficiency      | Vitamin B <sub>12</sub>                              |
|                         | Vitamin B <sub>1</sub> (Wernicke–Korsakoff syndrome) |
| Brain damage            | Trauma   |
|                         | Tumour   |
|                         | Abscess  |
|                         | Subarachnoid haemorrhage                             |

intramuscular haloperidol (2.5–5 mg) may be preferred. Management of alcohol withdrawal is summarized on page 605.

## THERAPEUTICS

### Hypnotics

Hypnotics should be reserved for short courses (because dependence and tolerance may occur with long-term use) to alleviate acute conditions after causal factors have been established. Benzodiazepines are the most commonly used hypnotics.

### Mechanism of action

Benzodiazepines bind to specific receptor sites that are closely linked to the GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor, inducing a conformational change that enhances the action of the inhibitory neurotransmitter GABA. Zopiclone is not a benzodiazepine but binds to the same receptor.

## Indications

Transient or short-term insomnia due to extraneous factors such as shift work or an emotional problem or serious medical illness. Short-term use only – up to 4 weeks.

## Preparations and dose

### Temazepam

*Tablets: 10 mg, 20 mg; oral solution: 10 mg/5 mL.*

**Oral** 10–20 mg at bedtime.

### Zopiclone

*Tablets: 3.75 mg, 7.5 mg.*

**Oral** 7.5 mg at bedtime; elderly, initially 3.75 mg.

## Side-effects

Drowsiness and lightheadedness, confusion and ataxia, especially in the elderly (avoid if possible). Hangover effects of a night-time dose may impair driving the following day. Paradoxical increase in anxiety and aggression; adjustment of the dose up or down usually improves the problem. Tolerance may develop within 3–14 days.

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in respiratory depression, acute breathlessness, severe liver disease, myasthenia gravis, sleep apnoea syndrome. Withdrawal symptoms (may be delayed for 3 weeks with long-acting preparation) if drug stopped abruptly after long-term use, consisting of anxiety, insomnia, depression, psychosis and convulsions.

## Anxiolytics

Anxiolytics, as with hypnotics, should only be prescribed in short courses (danger of dependence and tolerance following long-term use) to alleviate acute conditions after establishing the causal factors. Benzodiazepines are again the most commonly used anxiolytics.

## Mechanism of action

As above.

## Indications

- Short-term relief in severe anxiety
- In panic disorders resistant to antidepressant treatment

- Intravenously for short-term sedation with medical procedures, e.g. colonoscopy
- Prevention of the alcohol withdrawal syndrome
- Benzodiazepines also used in the acute management of status epilepticus.

## Preparations and dose

### Diazepam

*Tablets: 2 mg, 5 mg, 10 mg; oral solution: 2 mg/5 mL, 5 mg/5 mL; emulsion injection: 10 mg/2 mL; rectal solution: 2.5 mg/1.25 mL, 5 mg/2.5 mL, 10 mg/2.5 mL.*

**Oral** Anxiety: 2 mg three times daily, increasing if necessary to 15–30 mg daily in divided doses. Elderly: half adult dose. Insomnia associated with anxiety: 5–15 mg at bedtime.

**IM/IV** for severe acute anxiety and control of panic attacks: 10 mg repeated if necessary after not less than 4 hours (into a large vein at a rate not more than 5 mg/min). In status epilepticus: 10–20 mg i.v. repeated if necessary after 30–60 minutes; may be followed by infusion to maximum 3 mg/kg over 24 hours.

**By rectum** 500 µg/kg up to maximum 30 mg (elderly, half dose) repeated after 12 hours if necessary.

### Lorazepam

*Tablets: 1 mg, 2.5 mg; injection 4 mg/mL.*

**Oral** Anxiety: 1–4 mg daily in divided doses (elderly, half dose). Insomnia associated with anxiety: 1–2 mg at bedtime.

**IM/IV** for severe acute anxiety and control of panic attacks: 25–30 µg/kg, repeated if necessary every 6 hours (into a large vein by slow injection). In status epilepticus: 4 mg, by intravenous injection into a large vein.

### Chlordiazepoxide

*Capsules: 5 mg, 10 mg; tablets: 5 mg, 10 mg.*

**Oral** Anxiety: 10 mg three times daily in anxiety, increased if necessary to 60–100 mg daily. In alcohol withdrawal: 10–50 mg four times daily (under supervision) and reduced gradually over 7–14 days.

### Oxazepam

*Tablets: 10 mg, 15 mg, 30 mg.*

**Oral** Anxiety: 15–30 mg three to four times daily (half dose in elderly). Insomnia associated with anxiety: 15–25 mg (max. 50 mg) at bedtime.

Short acting and used as an alternative to chlordiazepoxide in alcohol withdrawal for patients with severe liver dysfunction, 15–30 mg four times daily (under supervision) and reduced gradually over 7–14 days.

## Antipsychotics ('neuroleptics')

### Mechanism of action

Blockade of CNS dopamine (D<sub>2</sub>) receptors.

### Indications

In the short term to quieten disturbed patients whatever the underlying psychopathology, e.g. schizophrenia, mania, toxic delirium. Used in the long-term management of schizophrenia. Also used in intractable hiccup and nausea and vomiting.

### Preparations and dose

#### Chlorpromazine

*Tablets: 10 mg, 25 mg, 50 mg, 100 mg; oral solution: 25 mg/5 mL, 100 mg/5 mL; suppositories: 100 mg.*

Initially 25–50 mg three times daily or 75 mg at night; adjust according to response.

#### Haloperidol

*Capsules: 500 µg; tablets: 500 µg, 1.5 mg, 5 mg, 10 mg, 20 mg; oral liquid: 5 mg/5 mL, 10 mg/5 mL; injection: 5 mg/mL, 20 mg/mL.*

**Oral** Psychoses: initially 1.5–3 mg (3–5 mg in severe cases) two to three times daily, may be increased to maximum 30 mg daily in divided doses and then reduced to maintenance dose when control achieved. Hiccup and vomiting: 1–1.5 mg three times daily.

**IM/IV** 2–10 mg repeated every 4–8 hours according to response to a maximum of 18 mg daily.

### Side-effects

Acute drowsiness, hypotension, tachycardia, convulsions, antimuscarinic symptoms (dry mouth, constipation, difficulty with micturition, blurred vision), neuroleptic malignant syndrome (hyperthermia, fluctuating conscious level, muscular rigidity, autonomic dysfunction). Extrapyramidal, haematological and endocrine side-effects with longer-term use (check a *National Formulary*).

### Cautions/contraindications

Use with caution in liver disease, renal impairment, cardiovascular disease, Parkinson's disease, epilepsy, myasthenia gravis, glaucoma. Contraindicated in coma and pheochromocytoma. Many drug interactions (check a *National Formulary*).

## Antiepileptics

Drug of choice for seizure type in adults. The newer antiepileptic drugs are not described here and should be initiated by a specialist.

### Carbamazepine

#### Mechanism of action

Inhibition of repetitive neuronal firing is produced by reduction of transmembrane  $\text{Na}^+$  influx, by use-dependent blockade of  $\text{Na}^+$  channels.

#### Indications

Drug of choice for simple and complex partial seizures, and for tonic-clonic seizures secondary to a focal discharge.

#### Preparations and dose

*Tablets: 100 mg, 200 mg, 400 mg; liquid: 100 mg/5 mL; suppositories: 100 mg; modified-release tablets: 200 mg, 400 mg.*

Initially 100 mg once or twice daily increased slowly to usual dose of 0.8–1.2 g daily (epilepsy) or 200 mg three to four times daily (trigeminal neuralgia). Total daily doses are the same for modified release preparations but given twice daily (may provide better steady-state levels).

#### Side-effects

Nausea and vomiting, especially early in treatment. Central nervous system toxicity leads to double vision, dizziness, drowsiness and ataxia. Transient leucopenia is common, especially early in treatment – severe bone marrow depression is rare. Hyponatraemia caused by potentiation of antidiuretic hormone.

#### Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in AV conduction abnormalities (unless paced), history of bone marrow depression, porphyria. Hepatic enzyme induction leading to accelerated metabolism of the oral contraceptive pill (dose of oestrogen should be increased to avoid failure of contraception), warfarin (reduced anticoagulant effect), ciclosporin and others (check with a *National Formulary*). Interactions also with other antiepileptic drugs.

### Valproate

#### Mechanism of action

Blockade of transmembrane  $\text{Na}^+$  channels, thus stabilizing neuronal membranes.

## Indications

Effective for all forms of epilepsy.

## Preparations and dose

*Tablets: 100 mg, 200 mg; solution: 200 mg/5 mL; injection powder for reconstitution: 400 mg.*

600 mg daily in two divided doses, increasing by 200 mg/day at 3-day intervals to usual dose of 1–2 g daily in divided doses.

## Side-effects

Gastrointestinal upset (nausea, vomiting, anorexia, abdominal pain, acute pancreatitis), increased appetite and weight gain, transient hair loss, dose-related tremor, thrombocytopenia, rarely severe hepatotoxicity. Drug concentration in plasma does not correlate with therapeutic effect and monitoring is only necessary to assess complications of suspected toxicity.

## Cautions/contraindications

Acute liver disease, porphyria. Monitor liver biochemistry 6-monthly in those most at risk of severe liver damage (check with a *National Formulary*). Many drug interactions with antiepileptics and other drugs (check with a *National Formulary*).

## Phenytoin

### Mechanism of action

Inhibit sodium influx across the cell membrane, reduce cell excitability.

## Indications

All forms of epilepsy except absence seizures, but used much less in developed countries. Also used in management of status epilepticus and in trigeminal neuralgia.

## Preparations and dose

*Capsules: 25 mg, 50 mg, 100 mg, 300 mg; suspension: 30 mg/5 mL; injection: 50 mg/mL.*

**Oral** 150–300 mg daily (single dose or two divided doses) increased gradually as necessary (with plasma-phenytoin concentration monitoring); usual dose 200–500 mg. Reference range for concentration 40–80  $\mu\text{mol/L}$  (10–20 mg/L) immediately before the next dose.

**IV** Give with blood pressure and ECG monitoring. 18 mg/kg diluted to 10 mg/mL in 0.9% sodium chloride at a rate not exceeding 50 mg/min (average-sized adult 1000 mg over 20 min) as a loading dose. Maintenance dose

100 mg i.v. at intervals of 6–8 hours monitored by measurement of plasma concentration.

## Side-effects

Intravenous injection may cause CNS, cardiovascular (hypotension, heart block, arrhythmias) and respiratory depression. If hypotension occurs, reduce infusion rate or discontinue. Other side-effects are dose related and include impaired brainstem and cerebellar function (nystagmus, double vision, vertigo, ataxia, dysarthria), chronic connective tissue effects (gum hyperplasia, coarsening of facial features, hirsutism), skin rashes (withdraw treatment), folate deficiency, increased vitamin D metabolism and deficiency, blood dyscrasias, lymphadenopathy and teratogenic effects.

## Cautions/contraindications

Contraindicated in sinus bradycardia, heart block and porphyria. Many drug interactions (check with a national formulary). Highly protein bound and can be displaced by valproate and salicylates, which therefore enhance the effect. Induction of hepatic drug-metabolizing enzymes and metabolism of warfarin and ciclosporin increased (see a *National Formulary* for full list).

## Fosphenytoin

### Mechanism of action

As for phenytoin.

### Indications

As for phenytoin.

### Preparations and dose

*Injection: 75 mg/mL.*

Pro-drug of phenytoin which can be given more rapidly and causes fewer infusion site reactions. Dose expressed as phenytoin sodium equivalent (PE) (fosphenytoin 1.5 mg = phenytoin sodium 1 mg).

Status epilepticus: initially 15 mg PE/kg by i.v. infusion (with blood pressure, ECG and respiratory rate monitoring during and for at least 30 minutes after infusion) at a rate of 100–150 mg PE/min. Maintenance 4–5 mg PE/kg daily (in one to four divided doses) by i.v. infusion at a rate of 50–100 mg PE/min.

## Side-effects

As for phenytoin.

## Cautions/contraindications

As for phenytoin.

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# Dermatology

## INTRODUCTION

Skin diseases are extremely common, although their exact prevalence is unknown. There are over 1000 different entities described, but two-thirds of all cases are the result of fewer than 10 conditions. In developing countries infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, leprosy and onchocerciasis are common, whereas in developed countries inflammatory disorders such as acne and eczema are common. Some conditions may be part of normal development, e.g. acne; others may be inherited, e.g. Ehlers–Danlos syndrome; still others are part of a systemic disease, e.g. the rash of systemic lupus erythematosus. The most common skin conditions and those which can be fatal, e.g. malignant melanoma, pemphigus, will be described in this chapter. The structure and functions of the skin are summarized in Figure 18.1.

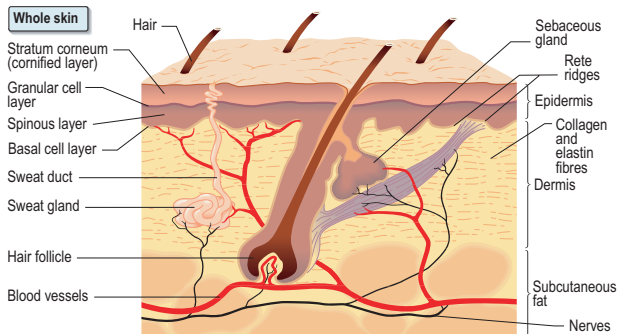
## SKIN AND SOFT TISSUE INFECTIONS

Infections of the skin and soft tissues beneath are common. The majority are caused by the Gram-positive cocci, *Staphylococcus aureus* (part of the normal microflora of the skin) and *Streptococcus pyogenes*. Sometimes infection is introduced by an animal bite or a penetrating foreign body and in these cases more unusual organisms can be found.

Cellulitis is a spreading infection involving the deep subcutaneous layer and is the most common skin infection leading to hospitalization. It falls into a continuum of skin infections that includes impetigo (superficial vesiculopustular infection in children), folliculitis (multiple erythematous lesions with a central pustule localized to the hair follicles) and carbuncles (abscesses in the subcutaneous tissue that drain via hair follicles). The last three infections are usually caused by *Staph. aureus*.

## Cellulitis and erysipelas

Cellulitis preferentially involves the lower extremities. Risk factors include lymphoedema, site of entry (leg ulcer, trauma, presence of tinea pedis



**Fig. 18.1** Structure and function of the skin.

- Physical barrier against friction and shearing forces
- Protection against infection, chemicals, ultraviolet radiation
- Prevention of excessive water loss or absorption
- Ultraviolet-induced synthesis of vitamin D
- Temperature regulation
- Sensation (pain, touch, temperature)
- Antigen presentation/immunological reactions/wound healing.

– ‘athlete’s foot’), venous insufficiency, leg oedema and obesity. It is usually caused by a streptococcus, rarely a staphylococcus, and sometimes community acquired MRSA. Erysipelas is the term used for a more superficial infection, often on the face. In the majority of cases it is caused by group A beta-haemolytic streptococci.

## Clinical features

Cellulitis presents as erythema in the involved area, with poorly demarcated margins, swelling, warmth and tenderness. There may be a low-grade fever. In erysipelas the area is raised and erythematous and sharply demarcated from normal skin.

## Diagnosis

The diagnosis is clinical. Patients should also be evaluated for risk factors for cellulitis (see above) which may prevent recurrence if treated. In the majority of cases, culturing blood or skin aspirates does not reveal a pathogen. Deep venous thrombosis is the main differential diagnosis.

## Treatment

Treatment is with phenoxymethylpenicillin and flucloxacillin (or erythromycin if penicillin allergic, all 500 mg four times daily). If disease is widespread

treatment is given intravenously for 3–5 days followed by at least 2 weeks of oral therapy. If cellulitis is recurrent, low-dose antibiotic prophylaxis (e.g. phenoxymethylpenicillin 500 mg twice daily) is given to prevent lymphatic damage caused by each attack.

## Necrotizing fasciitis

This is a deep-seated infection of the subcutaneous tissue that results in a fulminant and spreading destruction of fascia and fat but may initially spare the skin. There is a high mortality. Spreading erythema, underlying crepitus and systemic toxicity (out of proportion to the skin findings) follow severe pain at the site of infection. Type 1 is caused by a mixture of aerobic and anaerobic bacteria and is usually seen following abdominal surgery or in diabetics. Type 2, caused by group A streptococci, occurs in previously healthy patients. Treatment is urgent surgical debridement and aggressive broad spectrum antibiotic treatment with benzylpenicillin and clindamycin (+metronidazole in type 1).

## Gas gangrene

This is a deep tissue infection with *Clostridium* spp., especially *C. perfringens* and follows contaminated penetrating wounds. Toxins produced by the organism cause muscle necrosis with severe pain and tissue swelling, gas production and sepsis with rapid progression to shock. Treatment is urgent surgical debridement and intravenous antibiotics. Clostridial species are sensitive to a combination of benzylpenicillin and clindamycin. However, it may be difficult to differentiate gas gangrene from necrotizing fasciitis and treatment is initially with broad spectrum antibiotics (see above).

## Fungal infections

Dermatophytes is the common label for the three types of fungus that cause infections of the outer layer of skin, hair and nails. The main genera responsible are *Trichophyton*, *Microsporum* and *Epidermophyton*. All are spread by direct contact from other humans or from infected animals or indirect contact with exfoliated skin or hair; communal showers, swimming baths and the sharing of towels or sportswear aids transmission. Types of dermatophyte infections are:

- Tinea corporis – ringworm of the body usually presents with slightly itchy, asymmetrical, scaly patches which show central clearing and an advancing, scaly, raised edge.
- Tinea faciei – ringworm of the face often arises after the use of topical steroids. It tends to be more erythematous and less scaly than trunk lesions.

- Tinea cruris – ringworm of the groin presents as well demarcated red plaques with an arc-like border extending down the upper thigh.
- Tinea pedis – athlete’s foot is confined to the toe clefts where the skin is white, macerated and fissured or is more diffuse causing a scaly erythema of the soles spreading on to the sides of the foot.
- Tinea manuum – ringworm of the hands presents with a diffuse erythematous scaling of the palms with variable skin peeling and skin thickening.
- Tinea capitis – scalp ringworm is commoner in children. There is a spectrum from mild diffuse scaling with no hair loss to circular scaly patches with associated alopecia and broken hairs.
- Tinea unguium – ringworm of the nails presents as asymmetrical whitening or yellowish black discoloration of one or more nails with nail plate thickening and crumbly white material under the nail.

A host immune response in these infections is associated with the appearance of vesicles and pustules and sometimes an exudate.

Diagnosis is clinical and by microscopy of scrapings from skin, hair or nail. Fungal culture medium is used to identify the species. Localized ringworm is treated with topical antifungal cream (clotrimazole, miconazole, terbinafine or amorolfine applied three times daily for 1–2 weeks). Oral antifungal therapy (itraconazole 100 mg daily, terbinafine 250 mg daily for 1–2 months) is used to treat more widespread infection.

## Candida albicans

This is a yeast that is sometimes found as part of the body’s flora, especially in the gastrointestinal tract. It takes hold in the skin where there is a suitable warm moist environment, such as in the groin, interdigital clefts of the toes and around the nails. Infection can mimic ringworm but in the groin there are small circular areas of erythema in front of the advancing edge (satellite lesions). Treatment of localized infection is with topical antifungal cream or systemic antifungal therapy (itraconazole 100 mg daily for 3–6 months) for nail infection. Candida can also infect mucosal surfaces of the mouth or genital tract particularly in patients taking antibiotics (due to suppression of protective bacterial flora) or in immunosuppressed patients where infection can also be wide-spread and life-threatening.

## COMMON SKIN CONDITIONS

### Acne vulgaris

This is a common condition occurring in adolescence and frequently continuing into early and middle adult life.

## Clinical features

Increased sebum production by sebaceous glands, blockage of pilosebaceous units, follicular epidermal hyperproliferation and infection with *Propionibacterium acnes* all contribute to produce the clinical features of open comedones (blackheads) or closed comedones (whiteheads), inflammatory papules and pustules. Other features that may be present include hypertrophic or keloidal scarring, and hyperpigmentation, which occurs predominantly in patients with darker complexions. There is a tendency for spontaneous improvement over a number of years.

## Management

Acne should be actively treated to avoid unnecessary scarring and psychological distress. The aims of treatment are to decrease sebum production, reduce bacteria, normalize duct keratinization and decrease inflammation. There are a variety of approaches, the choice of which depends on the severity of the disease. Regular washing with acne soaps to remove excess grease is helpful (normal soaps can be comedogenic). 'Picking' should be discouraged.

**First-line therapy** Topical agents such as keratolytics (benzoyl peroxide), topical retinoids (tretinoin or isotretinoin), retinoid-like agents (adapalene) and antibiotics for inflammatory acne (erythromycin, clindamycin) are used in mild disease.

**Second-line therapy** Low-dose oral antibiotics, e.g. oxytetracycline, minocycline, erythromycin, trimethoprim, often help but must be given for 3–4 months. Hormonal treatment with cyproterone acetate 2 mg/ethinylestradiol 35 µg (co-cyprindol) is useful in women if there is no contraindication to oral contraception.

**Third-line therapy** with an oral retinoid (isotretinoin or acitretin) is given if the above measures fail, there is nodulocystic acne with scarring or there is severe psychological disturbance. Retinoids are synthetic vitamin A analogues that affect cell growth and differentiation. Although effective they are highly teratogenic and are absolutely contraindicated during pregnancy. All women of childbearing age should have a pregnancy test and contraceptive advice prior to treatment and pregnancy testing repeated monthly during the 4-month course. Over 90% of individuals will respond to therapy and 65% of people will obtain a long-term 'cure'.

## Psoriasis

Psoriasis is a common chronic hyperproliferative disorder characterized by the presence of well-demarcated red scaly plaques over extensor surfaces such as the elbows and knees, and in the scalp. There is an equal sex incidence with age of onset occurring in two peaks: 16–22 years and 55–60 years.

## Aetiology

The condition is polygenic (nine genetic psoriasis susceptibility loci have been identified) but is dependent on certain environmental triggers (infection with group A *Streptococcus*, drugs such as lithium, ultraviolet light, high alcohol use and stress). It is thought that psoriasis is a T-lymphocyte driven disorder to an unidentified antigen(s). T cell activation results in upregulation of Th1-type T cell cytokines, e.g. interferon- $\gamma$ , interleukins (IL-1, -2, -8), growth factors (TGF- $\alpha$ , TNF- $\alpha$ ) and adhesion molecules (ICAM-1).

## Clinical features

- *Chronic plaque psoriasis* is the most common. Well-demarcated, salmon-pink silvery scaling lesions occur on the extensor surfaces of the limbs, particularly the elbows and knees (Fig. 18.2). Scalp involvement is common and is most often seen at the hair margin or over the occiput. New plaques of psoriasis occur at sites of skin trauma ('Köbner phenomenon').
- *Flexural psoriasis* – red glazed non-scaly plaques confined to flexures such as the groin, natal cleft and sub-mammary areas. The rash is sometimes misdiagnosed as candida intertrigo, but the latter will normally show satellite lesions.
- *Guttate* ('raindrop-like') psoriasis occurs most commonly in children and young adults. An explosive eruption of very small circular or oval plaques appears over the trunk about 2 weeks after a streptococcal sore throat.



Fig. 18.2 Psoriasis of the knees.

- *Erythrodermic* and *pustular* psoriasis is the most severe and may be life-threatening. There is widespread intense inflammation of the skin which may be associated with malaise, pyrexia and circulatory disturbances.

## Associated features

Nail involvement occurs in 50% of patients with psoriasis and is manifest as pitting of the nail plate, onycholysis (separation of the nail from the underlying vascular bed), yellow–brown discoloration, subungual hyperkeratosis and, rarely, a damaged nail matrix and lost nail plate. Arthritis occurs in 20% of patients (p. 292).

## Management

**Topical treatment** For mild disease, reassurance and treatment with an emollient may be all that is necessary. Emollients (e.g. aqueous cream, emulsifying ointment, white soft paraffin) hydrate the skin and may have an anti-proliferative effect. More specific topical treatments for chronic plaque psoriasis on the extensor surfaces of the trunk and limbs include vitamin D<sub>3</sub> analogues (e.g. calcipotriol, calcitriol, tacalcitol) that affect cell division and differentiation, coal tar (antiscaling and anti-inflammatory properties), tazarotene (a vitamin A antagonist, i.e. a retinoid) and corticosteroids in combination with other treatments. Topical dithranol (inhibits DNA synthesis) can also be helpful but it causes staining of the skin and clothing and it may prove difficult to use at home on a regular basis. Salicylic acid acts as a keratolytic and is particularly useful for scalp psoriasis.

**Phototherapy** Ultraviolet A radiation (UVA) in conjunction with a photosensitizing agent, oral or topical psoralen, (PUVA) is usually highly effective for treating extensive psoriasis. Repeated treatments exaggerate skin ageing and carry the risk of UV-induced skin cancer.

**Systemic therapy** is with oral retinoic acid derivatives (acitretin or etretinate), immunosuppression (methotrexate, ciclosporin) or biological agents (TNF- $\alpha$  blockers and efalizumab, an anti-CD11a monoclonal antibody). They are used in resistant disease or for severe erythrodermic or pustular psoriasis. The retinoic acid derivatives are teratogenic and in women on childbearing age the possibility of pregnancy must be excluded before treatment and effective contraception must be used during treatment and for 3 years afterwards.

## Urticaria/angio-oedema

These are inflammatory predominantly dermal processes in which degranulation of mast cells is the final common pathway. The involved skin in urticaria (hives, 'nettle rash') is red and swollen due to vasodilatation and increased vascular permeability. The predominant symptom is itch. Similar processes

operate in angio-oedema but involvement is predominantly below the dermis and the swelling is less red and not itchy.

## Aetiology

Viral or parasitic infection, drug reactions (NSAIDs, penicillin, ACE inhibitors, opiates), food allergy (strawberries, food colourings, seafood) or, rarely, systemic lupus erythematosus are all causes but in most cases the underlying cause is unknown. Physical urticarias can be caused by cold, deep pressure, stress, heat, sunlight or water. *Hereditary angio-oedema* is a rare autosomal dominant condition due to a mutation in the C1-esterase inhibitor, a component of the complement system. There are recurrent episodes of non-pruritic, non-pitting subcutaneous or submucosal oedema typically involving the arms, legs, hands, feet, abdomen (nausea, vomiting, pain) and sometimes larynx (respiratory difficulty and sudden death).

## Management

Urticaria is managed by avoiding precipitating factors (including opiates and salicylates which degranulate mast cells) and oral non-sedating antihistamines (H<sub>1</sub> blocker), e.g. cetirizine 10 mg daily. Sedating antihistamines, H<sub>2</sub> blockers and dapsons are added if necessary. Intramuscular adrenaline and intravenous hydrocortisone are used in angio-oedema involving the mouth or throat. Hereditary angio-oedema is treated with C1 esterase inhibitor concentrates and fresh frozen plasma in the acute setting. Maintenance treatment is with the anabolic steroid stanozolol or danazol, which stimulates an increase in synthesis of C1 esterase inhibitor.

## Eczema

Eczema (dermatitis) is characterized by superficial skin inflammation with vesicles (when acute), redness, oedema, oozing, scaling and usually pruritus. The most common type of eczema is atopic eczema.

### Atopic eczema

#### Aetiology

There is a significant hereditary predisposition. The primary defect is thought to be an abnormal epithelial barrier function allowing antigenic and irritant agents to penetrate the barrier and come into contact with immune cells. Loss-of-function mutations in the epidermal barrier protein filaggrin predispose to atopic eczema in Caucasian individuals. An initial selective activation of Th2-type CD4 lymphocytes drives the inflammatory process with Th0 and Th1 cells predominating in the chronic phase. There are high levels of serum IgE antibodies, although their significance in contributing to the pathogenesis is unclear. Exacerbating factors include strong detergents and chemicals, cat and dog fur and some dietary antigens.



## Clinical features

There are itchy, erythematous scaly patches, especially in the flexures such as in front of the elbows and ankles, behind the knees and around the neck (Fig. 18.3). Scratching can produce excoriations and repeated rubbing produces skin thickening (lichenification) with exaggerated skin markings. Pigmented skin may become hyper- or hypopigmented and extensor surfaces are often involved (reverse pattern). Broken skin may become secondarily infected by *Staph. aureus* (appearing as crusted weeping impetigo-like lesions) or herpes simplex virus causing multiple small blisters or punched out lesions (eczema herpeticum) which can occasionally be fatal.

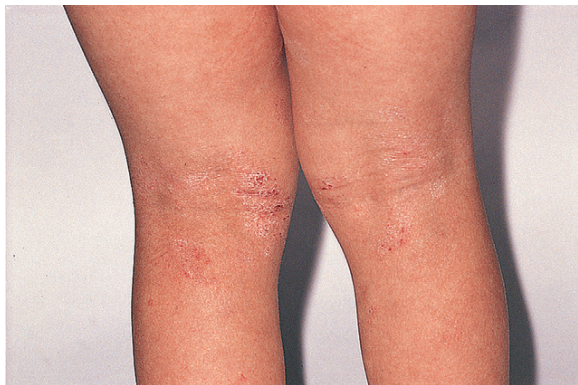
## Management

Known irritants should be avoided. Regular use of emollients, such as aqueous cream or emulsifying ointments, is useful in hydrating the skin. Topical corticosteroids form the mainstay of treatment. Mild steroids (e.g. 1% hydrocortisone) are used for the face and more potent steroids (e.g. betamethasone, fluocinolone) are used on the body and soles. Topical immunomodulators such as tacrolimus and pimecrolimus are particularly helpful for treatment in sensitive areas such as the face and eyelids. Antibiotics are indicated for bacterial superinfection and bandaging helps absorption of treatment and acts as a barrier to prevent scratching.

Second-line treatments in severe non-responsive cases include oral prednisolone, azathioprine and ciclosporin.

## Exogenous eczema (contact dermatitis)

In this condition there is acute or chronic skin inflammation, often sharply demarcated, produced by substances in contact with the skin. It may be



**Fig. 18.3** Atopic eczema behind the knees.

caused by a primary chemical irritant, or may be the result of a type IV hypersensitivity reaction. Common chemical irritants are industrial solvents used in the workplace, or cleaning and detergent solutions used in the home. With allergic dermatitis there is sensitization of T lymphocytes over a period of time, which results in itching and dermatitis upon re-exposure to the antigen.

## Clinical features

An unusual pattern of rash with clear-cut demarcation or odd-shaped areas of erythema and scaling should arouse suspicion and, in combination with a careful history, should indicate a cause. Patch testing, where the suspected allergen is placed in contact with the skin, is often useful in identifying a suspected allergen.

## Management

Causative agents should be removed where possible. Steroid creams are useful for short periods in severe disease. Antipruritic agents are used for symptomatic relief of itching.

## CUTANEOUS SIGNS OF SYSTEMIC DISEASE

### Erythema nodosum

Erythema nodosum is an acute and sometimes recurrent panniculitis which produces painful dusky blue–red nodules over the shins or lower limbs, with occasional spread to the thighs or arms. Causes are listed in Table 18.1.

## Clinical features

Painful nodules or plaques up to 5 cm in diameter appear in crops over 2 weeks and slowly fade to leave bruising and staining of the skin. Systemic upset is common, with malaise, fever and arthralgia.

**Table 18.1** Common causes of erythema nodosum

|   |
|---|
| Streptococcal infection*  |
| Drugs (e.g. sulphonamides, oral contraceptive pill)                                   |
| Sarcoidosis*  |
| Idiopathic*   |
| Bacterial gastroenteritis, e.g. <i>Salmonella</i> , <i>Shigella</i> , <i>Yersinia</i> |
| Fungal infection (histoplasmosis, blastomycosis) diseases                             |
| Tuberculosis  |
| Leprosy   |
| Inflammatory bowel disease*   |
| <i>Chlamydia</i> infection  |

\*Indicates commonest causes.

## Management

Symptoms should be treated with NSAIDs, light compression bandaging and bed rest. Recovery may take weeks, and recurrent attacks can occur. Dapsone, colchicine or oral prednisolone is used in resistant cases.

## Erythema multiforme (EM)

EM is an acute self-limiting condition affecting the skin and mucosal surfaces. A cell mediated cutaneous lymphocytotoxic response is present. Children and young adults are most commonly affected. The cause is unknown in 50% of cases but the following should be considered:

- Infections: herpes simplex virus and mycoplasma are the most common causes. Others are EBV, orf, HIV
- Drugs (e.g. sulphonamides, anticonvulsants)
- Autoimmune rheumatic conditions, e.g. SLE
- Wegener's granulomatosis
- Carcinoma, lymphoma.

## Clinical features

Symmetrically distributed erythematous papules occur most commonly on the back of the hands, the palms and the forearms. There may be a central lesion surrounded by pale red rings ('target lesions'). Eye changes include conjunctivitis, corneal ulceration and uveitis. Occasionally there is severe mucosal involvement leading to necrotic ulcers of the mouth and genitalia (EM major).

## Management

The diagnosis is based on the appearance of the skin lesion and a history of risk factors or related disease. The disease usually resolves in 2–4 weeks. Treatment is symptomatic and involves treating the underlying cause. Rarely, recurrent erythema multiforme can occur. This is triggered by herpes simplex infection in 80% of cases, and oral aciclovir can be helpful. In resistant cases, azathioprine (1–2 mg/kg daily) is used.

## Differential diagnosis

EM falls within a spectrum of drug-induced skin reactions that includes toxic epidermal necrolysis (widespread separation of the epidermis from the dermis) and the variant, Stevens–Johnson syndrome (damage is restricted to the mucosal surfaces with <10% bullous involvement of the skin).

## Pyoderma gangrenosum

This condition presents with erythematous nodules or pustules which frequently ulcerate. The ulcers, which are often large, have a classic bluish black undermined edge and a purulent surface. The main causes are inflammatory bowel disease, rheumatoid arthritis, haematological malignancy (myeloma, lymphoma, leukaemia) and primary biliary cirrhosis. In 20% of cases no cause is identified.

## Management

The underlying condition should be treated. High-dose topical and/or oral steroids are used to prevent progressive ulceration. Other immunosuppressants such as ciclosporin are sometimes used.

## Acanthosis nigricans

There is thickened, hyperpigmented skin predominantly of the flexures which can appear warty or velvety. It is associated with obesity, underlying malignancy (especially gastrointestinal) and hyperandrogenism in females.

## Neurofibromatosis

Type 1 (von Recklinghausen's disease) neurofibromatosis is an autosomal dominant disease caused by mutations in the *NF1* gene (encoding for a protein, neurofibromin) on chromosome 17. Clinical features include multiple fleshy skin tags and deeper soft tissue tumours (neurofibromas), 'café-au-lait' spots (light-brown macules of varying size), axillary freckling, scoliosis, and an increased incidence of a variety of neural tumours, e.g. meningioma, eighth-nerve tumours and gliomas. Type 2 is caused by a mutation in the gene encoding for the protein Merlin or Schwannomin (chromosome 22) and presents with bilateral acoustic neuromas, other neural tumours and cutaneous neurofibromas.

## Tuberous sclerosis (epiloia)

An autosomal dominant condition which in most cases is due to a mutation in either the *TSC1* gene (encodes hamartin) or the *TSC2* gene (encodes tuberin). There is mental retardation, epilepsy and cutaneous abnormalities. The skin signs include adenoma sebaceum (reddish papules around the nose), periungual fibroma (nodules arising from the nail bed), shagreen patches (flesh-coloured plaques on the trunk), ash-leaf hypopigmentation and café-au-lait patches. There may be pitting of dental enamel.

## Other diseases

Chronic kidney disease, liver disease and endocrine diseases all may have skin manifestations which are discussed in the relevant chapters.

## OTHER DISEASES AFFECTING THE SKIN

### Marfan's syndrome

Marfan's syndrome is an autosomal dominant disorder associated with mutations in the fibrillin 1 gene on chromosome 15. Abnormalities of collagen synthesis cause fragility of the skin and bruising. The most obvious abnormalities are skeletal: tall stature, arm span greater than height, arachnodactyly (long spidery fingers), sternal depression, hypermobile joints and a high arched palate. There is often upward dislocation of the lens as a result of weakness of the suspensory ligament. Cardiovascular complications (ascending aortic aneurysm formation, aortic dissection and aortic valve incompetence) are responsible for a greatly reduced life span.

### Ehlers–Danlos syndrome

Inherited defects of collagen lead to fragility and hyper-elasticity of the skin, with easy bruising, 'paper-thin' scars and hypermobility of the joints. The walls of the aorta and gut are weak and may rarely rupture with catastrophic results.

## BULLOUS DISEASE

Primary blistering diseases of the skin are rare. Skin biopsy for light and electron microscopy together with immunofluorescence is necessary for diagnosis. Much more common causes of skin blistering are chickenpox, herpes, impetigo, pompholyx eczema and insect bite reactions.

### Autoimmune bullous diseases

**Pemphigus vulgaris** Autoantibodies against desmoglein 3, an adhesion protein of the keratinocyte membrane, disrupt intraepithelial junctions resulting in formation of cutaneous and mucosal blisters (particularly oral mucosa) which evolve into erosions. Blisters can be extended with gentle sliding pressure (Nikolsky's sign). Blistering and erosions disrupt the skin's main functions (p. 804) and the disease can be fatal. Treatment is with high-dose oral prednisolone (60–100 mg daily) or pulsed methylprednisolone. Immunosuppressants (azathioprine, mycophenolate mofetil, cyclophosphamide, ciclosporin) are used long-term as steroid sparing agents. Intravenous immunoglobulin infusions and rituximab (p. 254) have also been used.

**Bullous pemphigoid** Autoantibodies against hemidesmosomal proteins (BP230 and BP 180) disrupt the dermal–epidermal junction leading to formation of large tense bullae often around skin flexures. Mucosal involvement is uncommon. Treatment is with high-dose oral prednisolone (30–60 mg daily) and immunosuppressants (see above).

### Mechanobullous disease (epidermolysis bullosa, EB)

This is a group of inherited disorders with blisters in the skin and mucous membranes after minor trauma. EB simplex is due to mutations of cytoskeletal proteins (keratin 5, keratin 14) within the basal layer of the epidermis and is generally a mild disease. EB dystrophica is a more severe disease and due to a mutation in the *COL-7A1* gene causing a loss of collagen V11 in the basement membrane. There is blistering with scarring, joint contractures, and involvement of the nails, mucosae and larynx. Squamous cell carcinoma is a complication and results in death in early adult life. The most severe form, junctional EB, causes death in infancy or early childhood.

## MALIGNANT SKIN TUMOURS

All of these are related to sun exposure.

### Basal cell carcinomas (BCC, rodent ulcer)

These are the most common malignant skin tumours. They are common later in life and occur on sun exposed areas, although rare on the ear. Most present as a shiny pearly nodule which may go on to ulcerate (Fig. 18.4). They rarely metastasize but can invade surrounding local structures. Treatment is by surgical excision. Radiotherapy, photodynamic therapy, cryotherapy or 5% imiquimod cream are used for the flat, diffuse superficial forms.

### Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC)

This is a more aggressive tumour than BCC and it can metastasize. It presents as rather ill-defined nodules that ulcerate and grow rapidly. Solar keratoses (erythematous silver-scaly papules with a red base) and Bowen's disease (isolated scaly red plaques resembling psoriasis) are pre-malignant. Multiple tumours may occur in patients who have had prolonged periods of immunosuppression. Treatment of SCC is with excision or occasionally radiotherapy.

### Malignant melanoma

This is the most serious form of skin cancer as metastasis can occur early and it causes a number of deaths even in young people. The clinical signs



**Fig 18.4** Ulcerating basal cell carcinoma.

listed in Table 18.2 help distinguish malignant from benign moles. Four clinical types exist:

- *Lentigo maligna melanoma* – a patch of lentigo maligna (slow-growing macular area of pigmentation often on the face occurring in the elderly) develops a nodule signaling invasive malignancy
- *Superficial spreading malignant melanoma* – large flat irregularly pigmented lesion which grows laterally before vertical invasion develops
- *Nodule malignant melanoma* – rapidly growing pigmented (rarely non-pigmented) nodule which bleeds or ulcerates
- *Acral lentiginous malignant melanomas* – pigmented lesions on the palm, sole or under the nail.

## Treatment

This is by wide surgical excision: 1 cm margin for thin melanomas (<1 mm) and 3 cm margin for thicker melanomas (>2 mm). Staging (by tumour thickness, metastasis and lymph node status) helps predict prognosis and 5-year survival. Metastatic disease responds poorly to treatment of all modalities.

**Table 18.2** Clinical criteria for the diagnosis of malignant melanoma

| <b>ABCDE criteria (USA)</b>          |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Asymmetry of mole                    |   |
| Border irregularity                  |   |
| Colour variation                     |   |
| Diameter                             |   |
| Elevation                            |   |
| <b>The Glasgow 7-point checklist</b> |   |
| Major criteria                       | Change in size<br>Change in shape<br>Change in colour                                   |
| Minor criteria                       | Diameter > 6 mm<br>Inflammation<br>Oozing or bleeding<br>Mild itch or altered sensation |

### Cutaneous T cell lymphoma (mycosis fungoides)

This is a rare type of skin tumour with a benign course. Scaly patches, resembling eczema or psoriasis, often on the buttocks, come and go or persist for many years. In elderly males, the disease may progress and be accompanied by lymphadenopathy and blood involvement (Sézary syndrome). Early cutaneous disease can be left untreated or treated with topical steroids or PUVA (p. 809). More advanced disease may require radiotherapy, chemotherapy, immunotherapy or electron beam therapy.

### Kaposi's sarcoma

This is a tumour of vascular and lymphatic endothelium that presents as purplish nodules and plaques in elderly males (especially Jewish people from Eastern Europe), as an endemic form in males from central Africa, and in patients with HIV infection (p. 54). Infection with herpes virus type 8 has an aetiological role. Treatment is with radiotherapy, immunotherapy or chemotherapy.



# Dictionary of terms

There are excellent on-line medical dictionaries with definitions for thousands of medical words and conditions. Sites for two of them are:

<http://www.medterms.com>

<http://cancerweb.ncl.ac.uk/omd/>

**Adenoma** A benign epithelial neoplasm in which the cells form recognizable glandular structures or in which they are clearly derived from glandular epithelium.

**Adjuvant** Term applied to chemotherapy or hormone therapy given after local treatment, in tumours where dissemination is undetectable but can be assumed to have occurred. If effective, it should lead to an increase in cure rate or overall disease-free survival.

**Aerobic** In microbiology refers to growing, living or occurring in the presence of molecular oxygen. Bacteria that require oxygen to survive (aerobic bacteria).

**Afterload** The load against which the cardiac muscle exerts its contractile force, i.e. the peripheral vascular tree.

**Agonist** A drug that has affinity for and in some way activates a receptor when it occupies it.

**Alkaptonuria** Inborn error of amino acid metabolism caused by a defect in the enzyme homogentisic acid oxidase. There is ochronosis (accumulation of a blue-black pigment in connective tissues) and arthritis. The slate blue-black pigmentation is most apparent in the sclera of the eyes, the external ears, and the tympanic membranes.

**Allogeneic transplantation** When another individual acts as the donor.

**Alopecia** Hair loss from areas where it is normally present.

**Alport's syndrome** Hereditary disorder characterized by progressive sensorineural hearing loss, nephritis and renal failure, and, occasionally, ocular defects; transmitted as an autosomal dominant or X-linked trait.

**Ambulant (ambulatory)** Able to walk; may be used to describe patients who do not require a wheelchair or are not confined to bed.

**Anaerobic** Lacking molecular oxygen. Growing, living or occurring in the absence of molecular oxygen, pertaining to an anaerobe.

**Angiography** A radiographic technique where a radio-opaque contrast material is injected into a blood vessel for the purpose of identifying its anatomy on X-ray.

**Anisocytosis** Increased variation in the size of the red blood cells.

**Annular lesions** Lesions occurring in rings.

**Antagonist** A drug that binds to a cell receptor and does not activate it.

**Antibody** An immunoglobulin molecule that has a specific amino acid sequence by virtue of which it interacts only with the antigen that induced its synthesis in cells of the lymphoid series (especially plasma cells), or with antigen closely related to it.

**Antigen** Any substance, organism or foreign material recognized by the immune system as being 'non-self', which will provoke the production of a specific antibody. disease and rheumatological disease which is not associated with a vasculitis.

**Antioxidant** An enzyme or other organic substance that has the ability to counteract the damaging effects of oxygen in tissues. It has been suggested that antioxidant vitamins such as vitamin E may provide protection against certain diseases, including atherosclerosis.

**Aphasia (dysphasia)** A disturbance of the ability to use language, whether in speaking, writing or comprehending. It is caused by left frontoparietal lesions, often a stroke:

- Broca's aphasia (expressive aphasia) is due to a lesion in the left frontal lobe. There is reduced fluency of speech, with comprehension relatively preserved. The patient knows what he/she wants to say but cannot get the words out.
- Wernicke's aphasia (receptive aphasia) is due to a left temporo-parietal lesion. The patient speaks fluently but words are put together in the wrong order, and in the most severe forms the patient speaks complete rubbish with the insertion of non-existent words. Comprehension is severely impaired.
- Global aphasia is due to widespread damage to the areas concerned with speech. The patient shows combined expressive and receptive dysphasia.

**Apoptosis** Programmed cell death, as signalled by the nuclei in normally functioning cells when age or state of cell health dictates.

**Apraxia** Loss of the ability to carry out familiar purposeful movements in the absence of paralysis or other motor or sensory impairment.

**Ataxia** Is due to failure of coordination of complex muscular movements despite intact individual movements and sensation.

**Atrophy** Thinning (e.g. of the skin).

**Autoantibody** An antibody that reacts with an antigen which is a normal component of the body.

**Autocrine** Autocrine signalling is where a cell secretes a chemical messenger that binds to receptors on the same cell leading to changes in the cell, see also paracrine or endocrine signalling.

**Autologous** When the patient acts as his or her own source of cells.

**Autosomal dominant** Requires only one affected parent to have the trait to pass it on to offspring.

**Autosomal recessive** Mutation carried on an autosome (i.e. a chromosome not involved in sex determination) that is deleterious only in homozygotes (identical alleles of the gene are carried). Both affected parents must have the trait to pass it on to their offspring.

**Bone marrow** Is obtained for examination by aspiration from the anterior iliac crest or sternum. In many cases a trephine biopsy (removal of a core of bone marrow tissue) is also necessary.

**Bulla** A large vesicle.

**Bursa** A closed fluid-filled sac lined with synovium that functions to facilitate movement and reduce friction between tissues of the body. Bursitis is inflammation of a bursa.

**Carcinoma** A malignant neoplasm arising from epithelium.

**Caseating** Developing a necrotic centre.

**CD (cluster differentiation) antigens** Antigens on the cell surface that can be detected by immune reagents and which are associated with the differentiation of a particular cell type or types. Many cells can be identified by their possession of a unique set of differentiation antigens, e.g. CD4, CD8.

**Chagas disease** caused by the parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi*. Transmitted to animals and people by blood-sucking triatomine bugs present only in the Americas. Acute symptoms are mild and non-specific but persist to chronic disease (cardiomyopathy, megaesophagus, megacolon) if untreated. Treatment is with benznidazole and nifurtimox.

**Cheyne–Stokes respiration** An abnormal breathing pattern in which there are periods of rapid breathing alternating with periods of no breathing or slow breathing.

**Choledochal cyst** A congenital anatomical malformation of a bile duct, including cystic dilatation of the extrahepatic bile duct or the large intrahepatic bile duct. Classification is based on the site and type of dilatation. Type I is most common.

**Chronic granulomatous disease** A recessive X-linked defect of leucocyte function in which phagocytic cells ingest but fail to digest bacteria, resulting in recurring bacterial infections with granuloma formation.

**Chronotropic** Positively chronotropic means to increase the rate of contraction of the heart; negatively chronotropic is the opposite.

**Clone** A population of identical cells or organisms that are derived from a single cell or ancestor and contain identical DNA molecules.

**Clubbing** Broadening or thickening of the tips of the fingers and toes with increased lengthwise curvature of the nail and a decrease in the angle normally seen between cuticle and finger-nail. Causes include congenital, respiratory (lung cancer, tuberculosis, bronchiectasis, lung abscess or

empyema, lung fibrosis), cardiac (bacterial endocarditis, cyanotic congenital heart disease), and rarely gastrointestinal (Crohn's disease, cirrhosis).

**Clubfoot (talipes equinovarus)** A deformed foot in which the foot is plantar flexed, inverted and adducted.

**Congenital** Something that is present at birth. It may or may not be genetic (inherited).

**Constructional apraxia** Inability to copy simple drawings: often seen in hepatic encephalopathy when the patient is unable to copy a five-pointed star.

**Contraindication** Any condition, especially a disease or current treatment, which renders some particular line of treatment undesirable.

**C-reactive protein (CRP)** Is synthesized in the liver and produced during the acute-phase response. It is quick and easy to measure and is replacing measurement of the ESR in some centres.

**Crust** Dried exudate on the skin.

**Cryoglobulins** Immunoglobulins that precipitate when cold or during exercise. They may be monoclonal or polyclonal, e.g. mixed essential cryoglobulinaemia, and result in a cutaneous vasculitis or occasionally a multisystem disorder.

**Cryptogenic** A disease of obscure or unknown origin.

**CT scan (computed axial tomography)** CT combines the use of X-rays with computed analysis of the images to assimilate multiple X-ray images into two-dimensional cross-sectional images ('slices'). With helical or spiral CT scanning, computer interpolation allows reconstruction of standard transverse scans to make 3-dimensional images. Often a contrast agent is given by mouth or intravenously to highlight specific areas. Risks of CT scanning are exposure to radiation, and allergies and renal impairment after intravenous contrast agents.

**Cytokines** Soluble messenger molecules which enable the immune system to communicate through its different compartments. Cytokines are made by many cells, such as lymphocytes (lymphokines) and other white cells (interleukins). Examples of cytokines, other than interleukins, include tumour necrosis factor (TNF), interferons and granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF).

**Dextrocardia** The heart is in the right hemithorax, with the apex directed to the right.

**DIDMOAD syndrome (Wolfram's syndrome)** Hereditary association of diabetes insipidus, diabetes mellitus, optic atrophy and deafness.

**Distal** A term of comparison meaning farther from a point of reference; it is the opposite of proximal.

**Doppler ultrasound** A form of ultrasound that can detect and measure blood flow. Doppler ultrasound depends on the Doppler effect, a change

in the frequency of a wave resulting from the motion of a reflector, i.e. the red blood cell in the case of Doppler ultrasound.

**Down's syndrome** Chromosome disorder associated either with a triplication or translocation of chromosome 21. Clinical manifestations include mental retardation, short stature, flat hypoplastic face with short nose, prominent epicanthic skinfolds, small low-set ears with prominent anti-helix, fissured and thickened tongue, laxness of joint ligaments, pelvic dysplasia, broad hands and feet, stubby fingers, transverse palmar crease, lenticular opacities and heart disease. Patients with Down's syndrome have an increased risk for leukaemia, thyroid disorders, coeliac disease and early onset Alzheimer's disease.

**Dupuytren's disease** Collagen cords form in the palm which eventually thicken and shorten causing flexion contractures of the hand. Ring and little fingers most commonly affected. Associated with increasing age, alcoholism, diabetes and epilepsy. Treatment for those with severely impaired hand function is fasciotomy,

**Dysarthria** Disordered articulation. Any lesion that produces paralysis, slowing or incoordination of the muscles of articulation, or local discomfort, will cause dysarthria. Examples are upper and lower motor lesions of the lower cranial nerves, cerebellar lesions, Parkinson's disease and local lesions in the mouth, larynx, pharynx and tongue.

**Dysplasia** Abnormal cell growth or maturation of cells.

**Ecchymoses** Bruises >3 mm in diameter.

**Ectopic** Located away from its normal position, such as an ectopic pregnancy.

**Empirical** Based on experience. Empirical treatment refers to treatment given to an individual that is based on the experience of the physician in treating previous patients with a similar presentation. It is not completely 'scientific' treatment.

**End-diastolic volume** The volume of blood in the ventricle at the end of diastole.

**Endemic** Present in a community at all times.

**Endocrine** Endocrine signalling refers to cells secreting hormones into the bloodstream to exert their action on cells distant to the cell of origin, see also autocrine and paracrine signalling.

**Endogenous** Related to or produced by the body.

**Enzyme-linked immunosorbent (ELISA) assay** A serologic test used for the detection of particular antibodies or antigens in the blood. ELISA technology links a measurable enzyme to either an antigen or antibody. In this way it can then measure the presence of an antibody or an antigen in the bloodstream.

**Epidemic** An outbreak of a disease affecting a large number of individuals in a community at the same time. The number of people affected is in excess of the expected.

- Epidemiology** The study of the distribution and determinants of health-related states and events in populations.
- Epitope** That part of an antigenic molecule to which an antibody or T-cell receptor responds.
- Erythema** Redness.
- Erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR)** The rate of fall of red cells in a column of blood; a measure of the acute-phase response. The speed is mainly determined by the concentration of large proteins, e.g. fibrinogen. The ESR is higher in women and rises with age. It is raised in a wide variety of systemic inflammatory and neoplastic diseases. The highest values (>100 mm/h) are found in chronic infections (e.g. TB), myeloma, connective tissue disorders and cancer.
- Erythroderma** Widespread redness of the skin, with scaling.
- Euthanasia** The illegal act of killing someone painlessly, especially to relieve suffering from an incurable disease.
- Excoriation** Linear marks caused by scratching.
- Exogenous** Developed or originated outside of the body.
- Exudate** Fluid rich in protein and cells, which has leaked from blood vessels and been deposited in tissues.
- Factitious** Artificial, self-induced.
- Familial Mediterranean fever** Inherited disorder more common in those of Mediterranean descent. Recurrent episodes of abdominal pain (due to peritoneal inflammation), fever and arthritis.
- Fissure** A cleft, groove or slit, e.g. an anal fissure is an ulcer in the anal canal.
- Fistula** A tunnel or abnormal passage connecting two epithelial surfaces, frequently designated according to the organs or parts with which it communicates, e.g. a vesico-colic fistula connects the bladder to the colon.
- Fitz-Hugh-Curtis syndrome** Inflammation of the liver capsule associated with genital tract infection – occurs in about 25% of patients with pelvic inflammatory disease. *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* and *Chlamydia trachomatis* are the main causes. Women present with sharp right upper quadrant pain with or without signs of salpingitis. Diagnosis is often clinical and treatment is with appropriate antibiotics.
- Gaucher's disease** Inherited (autosomal recessive) disorder of lipid metabolism caused by a deficiency of the enzyme  $\beta$ -glucocerebrosidase. Clinical features include hepatosplenomegaly and sometimes neurological dysfunction.
- Generic drugs** Non-proprietary drugs. They should usually be used when prescribing in preference to proprietary titles.
- Hallucinations** Perceptions that occur in the absence of external stimuli and while an individual is awake. They may involve any of the senses,

including hearing (auditory hallucinations), vision (visual hallucinations), smell (olfactory hallucinations), taste (gustatory hallucinations), and touch (tactile hallucinations). Hallucinations may be drug induced or caused by chronic alcohol excess, temporal lobe epilepsy, psychotic illnesses, or certain organic disorders, such as Huntington's disease.

**Histocompatibility antigens** Genetically determined isoantigens present on the membranes of nucleated cells. They incite an immune response when grafted on to genetically disparate individuals, and thus determine the compatibility of cells in transplantation.

**Howell–Jolly bodies** DNA remnants in peripheral RBCs seen post-splenectomy and in leukaemia and megaloblastic anaemia.

**Human leucocyte antigens (HLA)** Human histocompatibility antigens determined by a region on chromosome 6. There are several genetic loci, each having multiple alleles, designated HLA-A, HLA-B, HLA-C, HLA-DP, -DQ and -DR. The susceptibility to some diseases is associated with certain HLA alleles (e.g. HLA-B27 in 95% of patients with ankylosing spondylitis), although their exact role in aetiology is unclear.

**Hyperplasia** The abnormal multiplication or increase in the number of normal cells in normal arrangement in a tissue.

**Hypertrophy** The enlargement or overgrowth of an organ or part due to an increase in size of its constituent cells.

**Iatrogenic** Induced inadvertently by medical treatment or procedures, or activity of attending physician.

**Idiopathic** Of unknown cause.

**Idiosyncratic** Relates to idiosyncrasy – an abnormal susceptibility to a drug or other agent which is peculiar to the individual.

**Incidence** An expression of the rate at which a certain event occurs, as in the number of new cases of a specific disease occurring during a certain period.

**Incubation period** Period between transmission of the infecting organism and the start of symptoms.

**Inotropic** Positively inotropic means increasing the force of cardiac muscle contraction.

**Insidious** Subtle, gradual, or imperceptible development. May be used to refer to the onset of symptoms or signs before the diagnosis of a disorder.

**In vitro** Outside of the body in an artificial environment such as a test tube.

**In vivo** Within the body.

**Kawasaki's disease** An acute febrile illness (lasting more than 5 days) of unknown aetiology that occurs mainly in children. Features include damage to the coronary arteries which is reduced by treatment with aspirin and intravenous  $\gamma$ -globulin.

**Macule** A flat circumscribed area of discoloration.

**Maculopapule** A raised and discolored circumscribed lesion.

**Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)** Uses the body's natural magnetic properties to produce detailed images from any part of the body. It does not involve radiation. Gadolinium is used as an intravenous contrast medium – rarely causes nephrogenic systemic fibrosis (p. xx) in patients with renal impairment. MRI scanning is potentially life-threatening for patients who have had medical or surgical (or accidental) metal implants (e.g. pacemakers, metallic clips, metal valves and joints) because of potential movement within a magnetic field. A metal check (including foreign bodies in the eye) should be done before requesting an MRI. Some implants are MRI safe and some are not. Most MRI departments will have a comprehensive safety check list of such devices and implants.

**Marfan's syndrome** Autosomal dominant connective tissue disorder associated with mutations in the fibrillin 1 gene on chromosome 15. Up to one-third are new mutations. Clinical features include tall stature, long thin digits (arachnodactyly), high-arched palate, hypermobile joints, lens subluxation, incompetence of aortic and mitral valves, aortic dissection and spontaneous pneumothorax.

**Ménétrier's disease (giant hypertrophic gastritis)** Gastritis with hypertrophy of the gastric mucosa. Characterized by giant gastric folds, diminished acid secretion, excessive secretion of mucus, and hypoproteinaemia. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhoea and weight loss.

**Metaplasia** A change in the type of cells in a tissue to a form which is not normal for that tissue.

**Methaemoglobinaemia** A condition in which the iron within haemoglobin is oxidized from the ferrous ( $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ ) state to the ferric ( $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ) state, resulting in the inability to transport oxygen and carbon dioxide. Clinically, there is cyanosis. May be congenital or acquired (after exposure to certain drugs and toxins).

**Mirizzi's syndrome** Obstructive jaundice caused by compression of the common hepatic duct by a stone in the cystic duct or the neck of the gall bladder.

**Multidisciplinary team (MDT)** A group of healthcare professionals working in a team with clear protocols and management pathways leading to more tailored and efficient patient care. For instance the core elements of a lung cancer MDT would be respiratory physicians, thoracic surgeons, specialist nurses, radiologists, oncologists and palliative care physicians. The specialist nurse usually acts as the key source of support and information for the patient, bridging the gap to the clinical team.

**Mutation** A change in a gene, such as loss, gain, or substitution of genetic material, that alters its function or expression. This change is passed along with subsequent divisions of the affected cell. Gene mutations may occur randomly for unknown reasons or may be inherited.



**National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)** This is part of the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK and its role is to provide patients, health professionals and the public with authoritative, robust and reliable guidance on current 'best practice'.

**nd** Notifiable disease.

**Necrosis** Morphological changes indicative of cell death and caused by the progressive degradative action of enzymes; it may affect groups of cells or part of a structure or an organ.

**Nephrogenic systemic fibrosis (see MRI)** Formation of connective tissue in the skin which becomes thickened, coarse and hard and may lead to contractures and joint immobility. Systemic involvement, e.g. of lung, liver, muscles and heart can occur.

**Nodule** A circumscribed large palpable mass >1 cm in diameter.

**Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)** Examination based on planned clinical encounters in which the candidate (student, doctor or nurse) interviews, examines, informs, or otherwise interacts with a standardized patient (SP). SPs are individuals who are scripted and rehearsed to portray an actual patient with a specific set of symptoms or clinical findings. SPs may be able-bodied individuals or actual patients with stable findings.

**Oligoarticular** Affecting a limited number of joints.

**Oncogene** Gene coding for proteins which are either growth factors, growth factor receptors, secondary messengers or DNA-binding proteins. Mutation of the gene promotes abnormal cell growth.

**Osmolality** The concentration of osmotically active particles in solution expressed in terms of osmoles of solute per kilogram of solvent.

**Osmolarity** The concentration of osmotically active particles expressed in terms of osmoles of solute per litre of solution.

**Papule** A circumscribed raised palpable area.

**Paracrine** Paracrine signalling is where a cell secretes a chemical messenger that binds to receptors on cells nearby, see also autocrine and endocrine signalling.

**Pathognomonic** A symptom or sign that, when present, points unmistakably to the presence of a certain definite disease.

**Persistent vegetative state** A condition of life without consciousness or will as a result of brain damage.

**Petechiae** Bruises < 3 mm in diameter.

**Phenotype** The appearance and function of an organism as a result of its genotype and its environment.

**Plaque** A disc-shaped lesion; can result from coalescence of papules.

**Poikilocytosis** Increased variation in the shape of the red blood cell.

**Polychromasia** Blue tinge to red blood cells in the blood film caused by the presence of young red cells.

**Polymerase chain reaction (PCR)** Technique for rapid detection and analysis of DNA and, by a modification of the method, RNA. Using oligonucleotide primers and DNA polymerase, minute amounts of genomic DNA can be amplified over a million times into measurable quantities.

**Positron emission tomography (PET) scanning** Allows the imaging of structures by virtue of their ability to concentrate specific molecules that have been labelled with a positron-emitting isotope, e.g. a glucose analogue (that is not metabolized by the cell) tagged with fluorine (FDG). Metabolically active cells including malignant cells utilize and import more glucose than other tissues and thus take up FDG more avidly. False positives occur with active infections or inflammatory processes.

**Prevalence** Total number of cases of a disease in existence at a certain time in a designated area.

**Prognosis** A forecast as to the probable outcome of an attack or disease.

**Promyelocytes, myelocytes and metamyelocytes** Immature white cells seen in the peripheral blood in leucoerythroblastic anaemia.

**Prophylaxis** Prevention of disease.

**Proximal** A term of comparison meaning nearer or closer to a point of reference; for example, proximal myopathy is weakness of muscles nearest to the trunk, e.g. quadriceps.

**Purpura** Extravasation of blood into the skin; does not blanch on pressure.

**Pustule** A pus-filled blister.

**Radioimmunoassay (RIA)** Any system for testing antigen–antibody reactions in which use is made of radioactive labelling of antigen or antibody to detect the extent of the reaction.

**Refractory** Resistant to or not responding readily to treatment.

**Rhabdomyolysis** The destruction of skeletal muscle cells. May be due to electrical injury, alcoholism, injury, drug side-effects or toxins.

**Scales** Dried flakes of dead skin.

**Serum** The cell-free portion of blood from which fibrinogen has been separated in the process of clotting. Serum is the supernatant obtained by high-speed centrifugation of whole blood collected in a plain tube.

**Sinus** A blind track opening onto the skin or a mucous surface.

**Stomatocyte** A red blood cell with a central slit (stoma).

**Syndrome** A set of signs or a series of events occurring together that point to a single condition as the cause.

**Target cells ('Mexican hat cells')** Red blood cells with central staining surrounded by a ring of pallor and an outer ring of staining. They occur in thalassaemia, sickle cell disease and liver disease.

- Telangiectasia** A visible, dilated blood vessel creating small focal red lesions in skin, mucous membranes or gut.
- Teratogenic** Possessing the ability to disrupt normal fetal development and causing fetal abnormalities.
- TNM classification (tumour, node, metastasis)** Staging system for many cancers. T is the extent of primary tumour, N is the involvement of lymph nodes and M indicates the presence or absence of metastases. For instance T0–T4 indicates increasing local tumour spread.
- Transudate** A plasma-derived fluid that accumulates in tissues/cavities as a result of venous and capillary pressure.
- Tumour suppressor genes** Genes whose protein products induce the repair or self-destruction (apoptosis) of cells containing damaged DNA. Unlike oncogenes, they restrict undue cell proliferation.
- Turner's syndrome** Females with chromosomes 45X instead of the normal female chromosomes, 46XX. Growth failure, gonadal dysgenesis, widely spaced nipples, webbed neck, cardiac abnormalities, intelligence usually normal.
- Vesicle** A small, visible, fluid-filled blister.
- Von Hippel–Lindau syndrome** Autosomal dominant disorder characterized by cerebellar and retinal neoplasms, clear cell renal carcinoma, pheochromocytoma, pancreatic tumours, and inner ear tumours. Associated with germline mutations of the VHL tumour suppressor gene.
- Weal** A transiently raised reddened area associated with scratching.
- Xenotransplantation** Transplantation of organs or tissues between different species.
- Zoonosis** Transmission of a disease from an animal or non-human species to humans. The reservoir for the disease is not human.

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NB: Page numbers followed by f indicate figures; t, tables; b, boxes.

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- Shock 578b
- Anaphylaxis 576b
- Sepsis 577
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### Poisoning, drug and alcohol abuse

- Drug overdose 598b, 594-595
- Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome 604-605
- Alcohol withdrawal 606b
- Delirium tremens 605

### Endocrinology

- Myxoedema coma 622b
- Thyroid crisis 626
- Addisonian crisis 640b
- Syndrome of inappropriate ADH secretion 648
- Hypercalcaemia 651b
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- Hypophosphataemia 654-655
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- Hyperthermia 661-662
- Diabetes mellitus and other disorders of metabolism
- Hypoglycaemia 675
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### The special senses

- Epistaxis 707
- Stridor 708
- The red eye 708-709
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### Neurology

- Headache 715
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- Transient ischaemic attack 744-746
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- Gas gangrene 805
- Angio-oedema 809-810
- Bullous disease 815-816

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## Normal values

| <b>HAEMATOLOGY</b>                                |  |
|---|--|
| Haemoglobin                                       |  |
| Male  | 13.5–17.5 g/dL   |
| Female  | 11.5–16 g/dL   |
| Mean corpuscular haemoglobin (MCH)                | 27–32 pg   |
| Mean corpuscular haemoglobin concentration (MCHC) | 32–36 g/dL   |
| Mean corpuscular volume (MCV)                     | 80–96 fL   |
| Packed cell volume (PCV)                          |  |
| Male  | 0.40–0.54 L/L  |
| Female  | 0.37–0.47 L/L  |
| White blood count (WBC)                           | $4\text{--}11 \times 10^9/\text{L}$                                |
| Basophil granulocytes                             | $<0.01\text{--}0.1 \times 10^9/\text{L}$                           |
| Eosinophil granulocytes                           | $0.04\text{--}0.4 \times 10^9/\text{L}$                            |
| Lymphocytes                                       | $1.5\text{--}4.0 \times 10^9/\text{L}$                             |
| Monocytes   | $0.2\text{--}0.8 \times 10^9/\text{L}$                             |
| Neutrophil granulocytes                           | $2.0\text{--}7.5 \times 10^9/\text{L}$                             |
| Platelet count                                    | $150\text{--}400 \times 10^9/\text{L}$                             |
| Serum B <sub>12</sub>                             | 160–925 ng/L<br>(150–675 pmol/L)                                   |
| Serum folate                                      | 2.9–18 µg/L (3.6–63 nmol/L)  |
| Red cell folate                                   | 149–640 µg/L   |
| Red cell mass                                     |  |
| Male  | 25–35 mL/kg  |
| Female  | 20–30 mL/kg  |
| Reticulocyte count                                | 0.5–2.5% of red cells<br>( $50\text{--}100 \times 10^9/\text{L}$ ) |
| Erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR)              | <20 mm in 1 hour   |
| <b>COAGULATION</b>                                |  |
| Bleeding time (Ivy method)                        | 3–10 min   |
| Activated partial thromboplastin time (APTT)      | 30–50 s  |
| Prothrombin time                                  | 12–16 s  |
| International normalized ratio (INR)              | 1.0–1.3  |
| D-dimer   | <500 ng/mL   |
| <b>LIPIDS AND LIPOPROTEINS</b>                    |  |
| Cholesterol                                       | 3.5–6.5 mmol/L (ideal <5.2 mmol/L)                                 |
| High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol        |  |
| Male  | 0.8–1.8 mmol/L   |
| Female  | 1.0–2.3 mmol/L   |
| Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol         | <4.0 mmol/L  |
| Triglycerides                                     |  |
| Male  | 0.70–2.1 mmol/L  |
| Female  | 0.50–1.70 mmol/L   |
| <b>BIOCHEMISTRY (SERUM/PLASMA)</b>                |  |
| Alanine aminotransferase (ALT)                    | 5–40 U/L   |
| Albumin   | 35–50 g/L  |
| Alkaline phosphatase                              | 39–117 U/L   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Amylase  | 25–125 U/L  |
| Aspartate aminotransferase (AST)                         | 12–40 U/L   |
| Bicarbonate  | 22–30 mmol/L  |
| Bilirubin  | <17 $\mu\text{mol/L}$ (0.3–1.5 mg/dL)               |
| Calcium  | 2.20–2.67 mmol/L<br>(8.5–10.5 mg/dL)                |
| Chloride   | 98–106 mmol/L                                       |
| C-reactive protein                                       | <10 mg/L  |
| Creatinine   | 79–118 $\mu\text{mol/L}$<br>(0.6–1.5 mg/dL)         |
| Creatine kinase (CPK)                                    |   |
| Female   | 24–170 U/L  |
| Male   | 24–195 U/L  |
| CK-MB fraction   | <25 U/L (<60% of total activity)                    |
| Ferritin   |   |
| Female   | 6–110 $\mu\text{g/L}$                               |
| Male   | 20–260 $\mu\text{g/L}$                              |
| Post-menopausal  | 12–230 $\mu\text{g/L}$                              |
| $\alpha$ -Fetoprotein                                    | <10 kU/L  |
| Glucose (fasting)  | 4.5–5.6 mmol/L (70–110 mg/dL)                       |
| $\gamma$ -Glutamyl transpeptidase ( $\gamma$ -GT)        |   |
| Male   | 11–58 U/L   |
| Female   | 7–32 U/L  |
| Glycosylated (glycated) haemoglobin (HbA <sub>1c</sub> ) | 3.7–5.1%  |
| Iron   | 13–32 $\mu\text{mol/L}$ (50–150 $\mu\text{g/dL}$ )  |
| Iron-binding capacity (total) (TIBC)                     | 42–80 $\mu\text{mol/L}$ (250–410 $\mu\text{g/dL}$ ) |
| Magnesium  | 0.7–1.1 mmol/L                                      |
| Osmolality   | 275–295 mOsm/kg                                     |
| Phosphate  | 0.8–1.5 mmol/L                                      |
| Potassium  | 3.5–5.0 mmol/L                                      |
| Prostate-specific antigen (PSA)                          | $\leq 4.0$ $\mu\text{g/L}$                          |
| Protein (total)  | 62–77 g/L   |
| Sodium   | 135–146 mmol/L                                      |
| Urate  | 0.18–0.42 mmol/L<br>(3.0–7.0 mg/dL)                 |
| Urea   | 2.5–6.7 mmol/L<br>(8–25 mg/dL)                      |

#### BLOOD GASES (ARTERIAL)

|                    |                                |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| $P_{\text{aCO}_2}$ | 4.8–6.1 kPa<br>(36–46 mmHg)    |
| $P_{\text{aO}_2}$  | 10.6–13.3 kPa<br>(80–100 mmHg) |
| [H <sup>+</sup> ]  | 35–45 nmol/L                   |
| pH                 | 7.35–7.45                      |
| Bicarbonate        | 22–26 mmol/L                   |