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MAST CELL DISEASES

Recognising and managing triggers

A practical guide for people living with mast cell diseases

MASTOCYTOSIS & MAST CELL DISEASES AWARENESS DAY

mastocytosis-mcas.org

What are mast cell triggers?

People with mast cell diseases may react to a wide range of stimuli. These triggers prompt mast cells to release a wide variety of mediators, including histamine, prostaglandins and leukotrienes, leading to symptoms that can affect multiple body systems.

The PRISM study* surveyed over 540 people with mast cell diseases and found that **more than 50%** reported reactions to **foods, medications, environmental factors or stress.**

Common triggers

Each person with a mast cell disease is different. Some may react to certain triggers, while others may not react to any, and type of reaction is highly individual. Talk to your doctor about anything you believe may be causing you a reaction, and be mindful of the triggers your doctor advises you to be wary of.

Foods

- Alcohol (if it causes symptoms)
- Foods (individual; many tolerate a wide range)

TOP TIPS

- Consider using a diary for a short time to track which foods make you feel unwell
- Prioritise fresh and whole foods
- Read labels carefully

Stress

- Emotional stress
- Sleep deprivation
- Hormonal changes

TOP TIPS

- Practice mindfulness or gentle yoga
- Prioritise sleep hygiene
- Seek support from therapists or peer groups

Medications

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g., ibuprofen, aspirin)
- Opioids
- Certain antibiotics
- Medications with dyes or preservatives

TOP TIPS

- Discuss alternatives with your doctor
- Ask pharmacists about alternatives if you react to certain inactive ingredients
- Carry a list of medications you tolerate and any you react to

Temperature and physical stimuli

- Heat, cold, humidity
- Pressure, vibration
- Exercise

TOP TIPS

- Dress in breathable layers
- Avoid extreme temperatures changes
- Identify an exercise that your body is able to tolerate safely

Environmental factors

- Pollen, mold, dust mites
- Fragrances, cleaning products
- Smoke, pollution

TOP TIPS

- Use air purifiers and fragrance-free products
- Wear a mask in high-exposure areas
- Keep windows closed during pollen season

Managing triggers: A personal toolkit

- Consider tracking symptoms and triggers for a period
- Carry a list of your preferred products and medications
- Create an emergency plan with your care team
- Advocate for accommodations at work, school or events
- Educate close contacts about your condition and needs

References

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