



Allergies: When the Immune System Backfires

Video Transcript

A drug rash does rarely require rush decisions

[Andreas J. Bircher]: Since the age of 16, a man has been treated with phenytoin, an anticonvulsant for epilepsy. Today, he is 22 years old. Three days ago, he started to feel ill. He developed a fever and a severe sore throat.

His family doctor suspects a bacterial tonsillitis. The patient is treated with the antibiotic amoxicillin, an aminopenicillin, and ibuprofen against the fever and the sore throat. After seven days his tonsillitis is cured, and he stops the antibiotic and ibuprofen treatments while still taking phenytoin.

One day later, he develops a mildly itchy maculopapular exanthema. The next day, the exanthema spreads over the body and finally covers nearly his whole skin, with the exception of his face, his head, his hands, and his feet.

Luckily, the patient shows no systemic symptoms. The treating physician prescribes antihistamines and the corticosteroid cream. The exanthema disappears after roughly two weeks.