

Dermographic Urticaria

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A 52 year old doctor developed dermographism in adolescence, which became less frequent until it almost completely disappeared in recent years.

He had been sitting at his desk at home for several hours; he was wearing a T-shirt [Figure 1]. On his way to the shower he took the shirt off and his wife noticed lettering that appeared across his upper back [Figure 2]. The lettering, which was visible but did not cause any local skin irritation, lasted for about 10 minutes before it totally disappeared.

Dermographic urticaria, known also as skin writing, dermatographism, dermog-

raphism or urticaria factitia, is a skin phenomenon that occurs in 4–5% of the general population [1] in various degrees of severity and is one of the common forms of urticaria.

In dermographic urticaria, which derives from a mechanical stimulation of the skin, the irritated skin is raised and appears inflamed. In its most simple form dermatographism appears about 6 minutes after mechanical stimulation and undergoes spontaneous disappearance with 15–30 minutes [2].

The mechanism for the appearance of dermatographism is not fully understood. What is known is that there is activation of cutaneous mast cells that secrete vasoactive mediators with an increased concentration of serum histamine. The response appears to be mediated by immunoglobulin E [3]. Simple dermatographism, without itching, does not require

any special treatment, but known triggers should be avoided [4]. We recommended that our patient wear other shirts.

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Figure 1. DIADORA T-shirt



Figure 2. “DIADORA” dermatographism



“A man of courage never needs weapons, but he may need bail”

Lewis Mumford (1895-1990), American historian, sociologist, philosopher of technology, and literary critic