

Severe Pharyngeal Stenosis after Caustic Ingestion

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A 39 year old healthy man accidentally drank a mouthful of a caustic substance while working at home. He was immediately referred to the emergency room where he had to be intubated due to respiratory distress and stridor. Laryngoscopy revealed third-degree chemical burns, indicating the presence of circumferential exudate with mucosal erythema in the whole upper aerodigestive tract. Steroids and antibiotics were initiated, but the patient developed severe pharyngeal and esophageal stenosis. Tracheotomy and jejunostomy were therefore performed.

The picture shows severe circumferential hypopharyngeal stenosis as observed by direct laryngoscopy 2 months after the accident. The arrows mark the remnants of the epiglottis. The larynx at the glottic level was inspected with a 0 telescope and appeared to be normal. The stenosis was successfully treated by laser ablation, followed by decannulation of the tracheotomy tube 3 months later. The patient still suffers, however, from complete esophageal obstruction and is awaiting future surgical reconstruction.

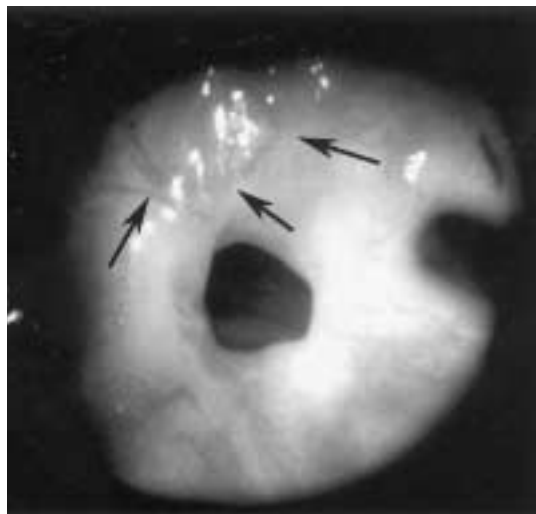
Caustic ingestion is a potentially life-threatening event encountered by emer-

gency room physicians. Accidental ingestion usually results in lesser injuries than in suicide attempts. However, significant morbidity can be caused even by small amounts of ingested material (as in the case presented here). Immediate management of these patients includes evaluation and resuscitation. Protective intubation may be necessary when supraglottic or glottic edema is found. Other issues pertaining to the treatment

of caustic burns, such as timing of endoscopy, antibiotic or steroid therapy, and possible surgical intervention, remain controversial [1-3].

References

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View via direct laryngoscopy of the hypopharynx. Note the circumferential stenosis leaving only a pinhole passage to the larynx. The arrows mark the remnants of the epiglottis.

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