

FIXED DRUG ERUPTION

A fixed drug eruption is a unique type of reaction to an internal medication. In most cases a drug allergy develops as a widespread eruption over your entire body. A fixed drug eruption refers to the fact that this type of reaction is fixed to a certain area in the skin. Most patients who develop a fixed drug eruption develop one or two small red spots that occur in a localized area. A typical size ranges from a dime to a half dollar.

A fixed drug eruption can begin minutes to hours after ingesting the medication which produces the allergy. In general it will resolve on its own when the medication is stopped.

Usually medications which are taken intermittently cause fixed drug eruptions. It is often difficult to piece together that a small red spot can be due to an internal medication. In some cases it can take months or years before the offending agent is discovered since the eruption does not usually produce any significant symptoms other than the slight swelling or redness in the skin. There are many common medications which can cause fixed drug eruptions such as antibiotics, pain medications or allergy medications. In some cases it is not the medication itself but a dye or preservative used in producing the product.

The first step in treating a fixed drug eruption is to identify the offending agent if possible. This medication should be stopped and not taken again in the future. Topical medication can be applied to the area to speed the healing. In some cases a small skin test is done to determine the exact nature of the process.

After a fixed drug eruption heals you may notice the skin stays slightly darker where the problem occurred. This is called postinflammatory hyperpigmentation and it may take months to fade.

In summary a fixed drug eruption is a unique type of reaction which can be difficult to identify. In general, it is harmless. If you have any other questions regarding this process please do not hesitate to ask before you leave the office.