Vasculitis

Vasculitis is a condition that causes inflammation and destruction of blood vessels (arteries and veins).

When blood vessels are damaged or destroyed, normal blood flow through them is interrupted, and the part of the body where the vessels are damaged too.

There are many different types of vasculitis. Some types affect only the skin, while others affect internal organs too. Some types do not affect the skin at all. In general, however, the skin is a common place for vasculitis to occur. Because it is easy to see, skin vasculitis can be the first sign of an internal problem and is important to recognize. We focus here specifically on skin vasculitis.

Symptoms
Skin vasculitis can be itchy, burning, or painful. Flat or raised red or purple spots, blisters, or ulcers can develop, and these marks may take a long time to fade. Some vasculitis appears at sites of pressure or clothing constriction. Skin vasculitis often occurs on the legs, but other areas of the body can be affected too.

Vasculitis involving internal organs can cause other important symptoms, such as fever or weight loss, joint pain or swelling, abdominal pain or bloody stools, frothy urine, cough, shortness of breath, numbness or tingling, weakness, and sinus problems. Depending on the type of vasculitis and where the affected blood vessels are, almost any part of the body can be involved.

Diagnosis
Diagnosing the specific type of vasculitis can be difficult. If vasculitis affects the skin, a biopsy of the skin is usually performed to help confirm the diagnosis. Questions about other symptoms, as well as blood work, urine samples, and other tests, help determine the type of vasculitis and whether internal organs are involved.

Treatment
The treatment of vasculitis depends very much on the type of vasculitis, which organs of the body are affected, and how badly they are affected. Vasculitis that is only in the skin often goes away on its own. However, it can also persist or recur and require medication.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Vasculitis Foundation
https://www.vasculitisfoundation.org
Vasculitis Patient Powered Research Network
https://www.vpprn.org

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