



HEMOLYTIC UREMIC SYNDROME

WHAT IS HEMOLYTIC UREMIC SYNDROME?

HEMOLYTIC-UREMIC SYNDROME (HUS) IS AN ILLNESS THAT OCCURS WHEN AN INFECTION IN THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM PRODUCES TOXIC SUBSTANCES THAT DESTROY RED BLOOD CELLS. IT OFTEN AFFECTS THE KIDNEYS.

WHAT CAUSES HUS?

IT OCCURS AFTER A GASTROINTESTINAL (ENTERIC) INFECTION, CAUSED BY ENTERIC INFECTIONS SUCH AS A TYPE OF *E. coli* BACTERIA, SHIGELLA OR SALMONELLA, AND SOME NON-ENTERIC INFECTIONS.

HOW COMMON IS HUS?

THIS ILLNESS IS MOSTLY SEEN IN CHILDREN AND IS THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF ACUTE KIDNEY FAILURE IN CHILDREN. HUS IS MORE COMPLICATED IN ADULTS AND IS SIMILAR TO ANOTHER DISEASE CALLED THROMBOTIC THROMBOCYTOPENIC PURPURA (TTP).

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HUS?

HUS OFTEN BEGINS WITH VOMITING AND DIARRHEA (WHICH MAY BE BLOODY). WITHIN A WEEK, THE PERSON MAY BECOME WEAK AND IRRITABLE. PEOPLE WITH HUS MAY URINATE FAR LESS THAN NORMAL AND OUTPUT MAY ALMOST STOP. BECAUSE RED BLOOD CELLS ARE BEING DESTROYED (A PROCESS CALLED HEMOLYSIS), THE PERSON QUICKLY BECOMES ANEMIC AND PALE.

HOW IS HUS TREATED?

TREATMENT INCLUDES TRANSFUSIONS OF PACKED RED CELLS AND PLATELETS, KIDNEY DIALYSIS, AND MEDICATIONS. MORE THAN HALF OF PEOPLE WHO GET TREATMENT WILL RECOVER, AND THE OUTCOME IS BETTER IN CHILDREN.

HOW CAN HUS BE PREVENTED?

HUS CAN BE PREVENTED BY COOKING HAMBURGER AND GROUND MEATS WELL. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO PREVENT OTHER, UNRECOGNIZED CAUSES AT THIS TIME.