

# BSACI

## Improving Allergy Care through education, training and research

### Angioedema

Angioedema is swelling which can affect any part of the body, usually the face, including the area around the eyes or lips, but also the hands, feet, or genitals. In severe cases, the lining of the throat or stomach can be affected. Symptoms can start with a prickling, hot or painful sensation in the affected part of the body, followed by swelling which can last several days. Depending on what part of the body is affected, the swelling can cause difficulty in talking or breathing (throat swelling) and can be life-threatening. Gut swelling may cause abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and/or sudden change in bowel habit.

Angioedema is estimated to affect about 10-20% of people and is not necessarily linked to an allergy. There are several causes of angioedema, which include:

- Allergic angioedema – the swelling is caused by an allergic reaction and can be associated with hives.
- Idiopathic angioedema – there is no known cause for the swelling, although certain factors may trigger the symptoms, such as stress, infection, a change in temperature.
- Medication – Angioedema can be a side effect of certain medications, most often blood pressure medications.
- Other causes - rarely angioedema may occur due to a defective inherited gene, a blood disorder or autoimmunity.

the history of symptoms to find out if there is a trigger such as an allergen (e.g., food) or medication (e.g., blood pressure medication) or whether the symptoms are due to an inherited condition or other cause. Tests may include allergy skin prick test and blood tests including immune markers.

When a diagnosis has been made, the management will depend on the type of angioedema:

- **Allergic reaction-** avoidance of the allergen is the main management, with accidental exposure being treated with antihistamines and adrenaline if required.
- **Medication-** stopping or changing the medication should prevent further reactions, although it may take a few months before symptoms settle.
- **Idiopathic** - symptoms may be more difficult to control, as swelling may occur spontaneously. Treatment options involve antihistamines and occasionally short courses of steroids.
- **Hereditary Angioedema** – medications can be used to prevent future attacks of angioedema or to treat current attack