

Understanding Plummer-Vinson Syndrome

Approximately 3-15% of individuals with Plummer-Vinson Syndrome develop esophageal or pharyngeal cancer.

1 Introduction

Plummer-Vinson Syndrome (PVS) is characterized by three main symptoms: difficulty swallowing, low levels of iron in the blood and the presence of esophageal webs. Nowadays, the syndrome is relatively uncommon. However, it is important to recognize that it can lead to a higher chance of developing squamous cell carcinoma in the pharynx and esophagus.

2 Symptoms

The syndrome often occurs in people with long-term iron deficiency anemia. Some of the more common symptoms include:

- Having difficulty swallowing due to small, thin growths of tissue in the esophagus
- Weakness and fatigue
- Pallor
- Tachycardia
- Weight-loss

3 Diagnosis

The diagnosis of Plummer-Vinson Syndrome is determined by the presence of esophageal webs. Medical professionals often use a Barium swallow x-ray and video fluoroscopy to identify these webs in a patient. An upper gastrointestinal endoscopy can also detect them. Laboratory exams can be used to reveal iron deficiency, which is one of the most common symptoms of PVS.

4 Treatments

Iron supplementation and mechanical dilation are effective treatments for Plummer-Vinson Syndrome. However, if there is a notable obstruction of the esophageal lumen caused by the esophageal web, rupture and opening of the web are necessary. Health professionals can do so by performing endoscopic biopsies, electric or laser-based incisions and on rare occasions, even surgical resection.

Did you know?

Only seven cases of Plummer-Vinson syndrome have been reported in children and teenagers aged 14 to 19 worldwide.

For more information on Plummer-Vinson Syndrome and supportive resources, please visit medlineplus.gov

References:

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