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IDIOPATHIC INTRACRANIAL HYPERTENSION (IIH) (Pseudotumor Cerebri)

Causes: Increased intracranial pressure (ICP) usually due to:

Weight gain in a young female

Excessive vitamin A intake: liver, kale/greens, carrots, multi-vitamins, cod liver oil

High salt diet: processed meats, soup, most snacks, sports drinks (ex. Gatorade), most bread

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)

Blocked vein in the brain, MRI/MRV will rule this out

Medications: for acne (tetracycline, doxycycline, minocycline, retin A pills), lithium, steroids, etc

Symptoms:

Headaches, especially when laying down, bending over, coughing, staining or lifting

Blurred vision, often temporarily worse when bending over, coughing or lifting for several seconds

Double vision (diplopia), side-by-side double vision at distance

Neck stiffness

Pulsating noise in the ears (hearing your heartbeat in your head)

Evaluation:

MRI/MRV brain with contrast to rule out mass, hydrocephalus, blocked cerebral vein, etc.

Lumbar puncture (LP) in some cases to measure the opening pressure (normal usually <25 cm) and to lower the ICP temporarily, and to send spinal fluid for analysis (rarely abnormal)

Sleep study and CPAP machine if OSA suspected

Treatment:

At least 6% weight loss (Low Carb diet/Intermittent Fasting diet/big lunch+small dinner/increased exercise)

Low salt and vitamin A diet (<5g salt=<1 teaspoon/day, no processed meats/fast food/most breads/snacks/soy sauce/soup/most Asian and Mexican food), and low vitamin A diet (no liver, avoid kale/greens/carrots/spinach/sweet potatoes/multivitamins)

Stop acne pills (acne creams usually ok), and lower or stop lithium or steroids if possible

Treat obstructive sleep apnea with a CPAP machine and weight loss

Medication: Diamox (acetazolamide), Topamax (topiramate), or a diuretic (HCTZ, spironolactone, furosemide)

Surgery: Optic nerve sheath fenestration or a shunt in brain or spine if needed to rapidly lower the ICP in severe cases

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