



## Centipede Poisoning

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### Clinical Image

35-year-old woman was admitted to our hospital with generalized erythema and itching for 1 week after drinking Chinese Herbs containing 3 dry centipedes per dose for 4 days. Laboratory results showed a white-cell count of 60,600 per cubic millimeter (reference range, 4,000 to 10,000) with 55.0% neutrophils (reference range, 50.0 to 70.0) and 23.0% lymphocytes (reference range, 20.0 to 40.0), a total bilirubin level of 4.13 mg per deciliter (reference range, 0.1 mg to 1.0 mg per deciliter), a direct bilirubin level of 2.66 mg per deciliter (reference range, 0 mg to 0.2 mg per deciliter), a serum alanine aminotransferase level of 269 U per liter (reference range, 7 to 40), a serum aspartate aminotransferase level of 121 U per liter (reference range, 0 to 40), a serum albumin level of 24.9 g per liter (reference range, 35.0 to 50). Additional symptoms included fatigue, skin and sclera yellowing, facial and limbs edema, bilateral axillary lymph node enlargement with tenderness (Panel A). We made the diagnosis of centipede poisoning. She accepted hydration, intravenous methylprednisolone and immunoglobulin, adalimumab injection and hepatica treatment. Her symptoms improved during hospitalization (Panel B), while her CBC and liver function indicators returned to normal. She was discharged after 2 weeks (Figure 1).

Centipede, a toxic traditional Chinese medicine, has been used for more than 2000 years. Most medicinal centipedes are the dry bulks of *Scolopendra subspinipes mutilans* L. Koch (Panel C, the sample patient provided), whose venom activity decreased [1]. Centipede venom of living centipedes (*S. s. mutilans*) contains more than 500 proteins and peptides produced and stored in centipede's chelicera, 50 of which has been identified to involved in 8 pharmacological properties though the mechanism remains unknown [2]. However, the dry centipede still contains some histamine-like components, which may play a role in the centipede poisoning.

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Figure 1: Skin lesion and the centipede sample (A: Generalized erythema appeared in the patient's skin before the treatment; B: Erythema regression after the treatment; C: The centipede sample provided by the patient).

### References

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