Barnacle allergy – Report of 2 cases
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Introduction: Barnacles (Pollicipes pollicipes), a type of seafood found on sea coasts worldwide, are a delicacy consumed in Portugal, Spain, France and South America. Barnacle allergy is rare, with few published cases [1].

Case Report:
Case 1: A 4-year-old boy with allergic rhinitis, sensitized to pollens and house dust mites, reported 2 suspected food-related allergic reactions. In the first episode, he complained of pruritus and facial erythema immediately after eating barnacles and fish. The second episode occurred 6 months later and he presented with dyspnea, cough, urticaria and facial edema immediately after eating hake. He had a specific IgE to hake=0.34kU/L and positive skin prick-prick tests (SPPT) (raw hake: 7mm; cooked hake: 5mm; histamine: 4mm) performed at another hospital. No further tests were conducted and he was instructed by his previous physician to avoid all fishes. A more detailed history at our out-patient clinic revealed that he continued to ingest and tolerate fish. Also, the parents were eating barnacles in the second episode and they could not guarantee the absence of cross contamination with the son’s food. One year after the last episode, SPPT with barnacle were performed and they were positive (raw meat: 13mm, cooked meat: 13mm, histamine: 4mm). Parents refused oral provocation test (OPT).

Comment: This case illustrates the importance of hidden allergens, cross contamination and a detailed history in order to establish a correct diagnosis and unnecessary dietary restrictions.

Case 2: A 9-year-old boy, with allergic rhinitis undergoing allergen immunotherapy with D. pteronyssinus, was referred to our Allergy Department for an episode of dyspnea, nausea, and vomiting, oral and nasal pruritus immediately after eating 4 barnacles. He was rushed to the ER and successfully treated with corticosteroids, antihistamines and nebulized salbutamol. Four months later, SPPT were positive to cooked barnacle (meat: 7mm; histamine 10mg/ml: 5mm); OPT with barnacle was not performed.

Conclusion: Barnacle allergy is a rare, but its allergenic potential is well established. Molecular allergens and cross-reactivity with mites have been described [1].

Reference: