

Examination

Blood pressure is 146/88 mmHg. There are no abnormalities in the cardiovascular or respiratory systems or the abdomen. There is some wasting of the muscles in the upper limbs, particularly in the left hand. There is some fasciculation in the muscles of the forearms bilaterally. Power is globally reduced in the left hand and slightly reduced in the right hand. Muscle tone is normal. The biceps and triceps jerks are brisk bilaterally. There is no sensory loss. There is slight dysarthria.

Questions

- What is the diagnosis?
- What is the prognosis?

Case 4:

History

A 63-year-old woman goes to her general practitioner (GP) complaining of extreme tiredness. She has been increasingly fatigued over the past year, but in recent weeks she has become breathless on exertion and light-headed and complained of headaches. Her feet have become numb, and she has started to become unsteady on her feet. She has had no significant previous medical illnesses. She is a retired teacher and lives alone. Until the last 2 years she was active, walking 3 or 4 miles a day. She is a non-smoker and drinks about 15 units of alcohol per week. She is taking no regular medication. Her mother and one of her two sisters have thyroid problems.

Examination

Her conjunctivae are pale, and sclerae are yellow. Her temperature is 37.8°C. Her pulse rate is 96/min and regular, and blood pressure is 142/72 mmHg. Examination of her cardiovascular, respiratory and abdominal systems is normal. She has a symmetrical distal weakness affecting her arms and legs. Knee and ankle jerks are absent, and she has extensor plantar responses. She has sensory loss in a glove-and-stocking distribution with a particularly severe loss of joint position sense.

INVESTIGATIONS		Normal
Haemoglobin	4.2g/dL	11.7–15.7 g/dL
Mean corpuscular volume (MCV)	112fL	80–99fL
White cell count	$3.3 \times 10^9/L$	$3.5\text{--}11.0 \times 10^9/L$
Platelets	$102 \times 10^9/L$	$150\text{--}440 \times 10^9/L$
Sodium	136mmol/L	135–145mmol/L
Potassium	4.4mmol/L	3.5–5.0mmol/L
Urea	5.2mmol/L	2.5–6.7mmol/L
Creatinine	92 μ mol/L	70–120 μ mol/L
Glucose	4.4mmol/L	4.0–6.0mmol/L
Bilirubin	45mmol/L	3–17mmol/L
Alanine transaminase	33IU/L	5–35IU/L
Alkaline phosphatase	263IU/L	30–300IU/L