A 55-year-old right-handed man started phenytoin after 2 seizures. Four weeks later, he complained of involuntary facial movements. Examination revealed orofacial dyskinesias: eyebrow elevation and lip pursing (video on the Neurology® Web site at www.neurology.org). No ataxia, slurred speech, or nystagmus was seen. His phenytoin level was 29.5 mg/L when examined, increased from 14.6 mg/L 15 days earlier. Phenytoin discontinued and dyskinesias resolved within 2 weeks.

Dyskinesias, rare but well-documented complications of phenytoin, occur during initial or chronic treatment. Elevation of phenytoin level is not necessary for dyskinesias to develop: dyskinesias usually resolve with drug cessation. Recognition of this phenytoin side effect may preempt an extensive workup.

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Teaching Video NeuroImages: Phenytoin-induced orofacial dyskinesias
Brendan P. Lucey
Neurology 2012;79;e177
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