

QUESTION A patient with a long history of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) has been taking prednisone 5 mg daily for the past 10 years. She has been admitted to hospital with a 2-week history of increasing weakness and difficulty walking. She has lost 10 kg in the last 6 months. She has no other symptoms. What is the most likely cause of her weakness?

- ANSWERS**
1. Hypokalaemia
 2. Hypocalcaemia
 3. Hypomagnesaemia
 4. Hypophosphataemia
 5. Hypothyroidism

ANSWER 4. Hypophosphataemia



EXPLANATION

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

INTRODUCTION Hypophosphataemia is a common electrolyte abnormality. It is often asymptomatic but can cause weakness, respiratory failure, and rhabdomyolysis. It is most commonly caused by increased renal excretion of phosphate, which can be due to a variety of causes.

CAUSES The most common cause of hypophosphataemia is increased renal excretion of phosphate, which can be due to a variety of causes.

CLINICAL PRESENTATION Hypophosphataemia is often asymptomatic but can cause weakness, respiratory failure, and rhabdomyolysis. It is most commonly caused by increased renal excretion of phosphate, which can be due to a variety of causes.

DIAGNOSIS Hypophosphataemia is diagnosed by a low serum phosphate level on a chemistry panel.

TREATMENT Hypophosphataemia is treated with oral or intravenous phosphate supplements.