

DESCRIPTION

A reaction that involves the skin. Hives may occur anywhere on the body, but the arms, legs, and trunk are most often affected. Urticaria is the medical name for hives. Hives are very common and can affect any age group.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Raised, red areas on the skin. They may be referred to as wheals or welts. They usually itch, but they may also burn or sting. The size may range from small spots to the size of a dinner plate. They can sometimes cause the whole lip or eyelid to swell.
- Wheals and plaques change shape, go away, and come back in minutes or hours.

CAUSES

Release of histamines. These are chemicals in the cells of the human body that are released during an allergic reaction. They may be released due to a specific reaction or in some cases for unknown reasons.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Medications.
- Food allergens, dyes or preservatives.
- Environmental triggers such as cold, heat, water or sun.
- Exposure to animals or insects.
- Infection (bacterial, viral, fungal).
- Specific disorders of the blood.
- Physical and emotional stress.
- Exercise.
- Tight clothing/pressure points.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- There are no specific preventive measures to stop an outbreak of hives. If you know the cause, avoid it in the future.
- Your health care provider may advise you to keep an emergency kit handy if you have had severe reactions.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Hives usually clear up within hours or days (even if the cause is unknown). They can be uncomfortable, but normally they cause no complications. A few cases become chronic and may last for weeks. Other allergic reactions that may occur with hives are Angioedema which causes face, throat, and tongue swelling or Anaphylaxis a severe reaction that causes shock and difficulty in breathing. If the reaction is severe, hospital care may be needed.

MEDICATIONS

- Epinephrine by injection for severe symptoms.
- Oral steroids may also be prescribed to reduce inflammation.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription today.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription tomorrow.

Your doctor also recommends the following over-the-counter medications. These medications may offer significant symptom relief:

- For mild pain use ibuprofen or naproxen.
- Antihistamine

- Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription, even if you start to feel better.
- Antibiotics and steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION FOR

- Swollen lips, tongue, or face.
- Stomach pain, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- New or unexplained symptoms develop.
- Shortness of breath or wheezing.
- Any feeling of weakness or faintness.