



Hives

What are hives?

Hives (urticaria) are a red, itchy rash caused by histamine release in the skin. Hives are classified as acute (new hives daily for a period of time less than eight weeks in duration) or chronic (new hives daily for a period of time greater than eight weeks in duration).

Acute hives are generally treated symptomatically; we try to control the itching until the rash resolves.

With chronic hives, we may perform testing to try to find a cause if there is something in your medical history that suggests a possible problem with hives. Be aware that this testing is negative in 90% of cases.

What causes hives?

Hives are usually an allergic reaction to something internal. In most cases they resolve on their own over a period a few weeks. As above, we usually cannot pinpoint the cause of hives. They are sometimes the result of a medication or infection. (Even over the counter products such as cough medicines, laxatives, mouthwashes and vitamins may sometimes be the cause of hives.)

How are hives treated?

Hives are treated with antihistamines to control the release of histamines in the skin (this stops the itching). Topical (rub-on) medications do not help hives. Antihistamines are of no value at all if you wait until the hives develop to take them. For this reason, we ask you to **take your medication daily** once you have been started on it **whether you are experiencing hives that day or not**.

What should I avoid when I have hives?

Hot showers, exercise, or anything that makes you hot will aggravate hives. Narcotics can both cause hives and aggravate pre-existing hives. Aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve) are also common aggravating agents.

If we determine that a medication caused your hives, that medication should be avoided in the future. Continued use could result in a serious allergic reaction.

For Questions or Emergency Care:

Call the office at **601-815-3374**. You may need to speak with the doctor on-call.