

EAR, NOSE, THROAT &amp; ALLERGY CENTER

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## HIVES (URTICARIA)

### Acute Urticaria

- Defined as hives lasting less than 6 weeks. It is estimated to affect 15-25% of the population at least once in their life.
- Possible causes include:
  - Medication reaction (Penicillin, Sulfa or other antibiotics) (Motrin, Ibuprofen, Aspirin, etc.)
  - Fixed food allergies (nuts, chocolate, fish, eggs, berries, tomatoes, milk).
  - Latex exposure
  - Insect sting
  - Allergies to pollens or chemicals
  - Infections
- Treatment involves identifying and avoiding the obvious triggers and possibly adding non-sedating antihistamines such as Xyzal, or Allegra, which are prescription or using over the counter medications such as Claritin or Zyrtec.

### Chronic Urticaria

- Defined as hives lasting more than six weeks and 70% of the time, and no cause can be found.
- Identifiable causes include:
  - Autoimmune diseases such as thyroiditis, Rheumatic diseases such as Lupus or Sjogren's.
  - Infectious causes such as Hepatitis B & C, mononucleosis, or bacterial infections of the sinus's teeth, etc.
  - Physical causes such as cold exposure, stress, exercise, water exposure, sunlight exposure and pressure applied to the skin.

- Inflammation of the vessels in the skin caused by medications (ACE inhibitors, Penicillin's, Sulfamides, Thiazides, Fluoxetine, etc.).
- Work up includes blood tests and allergy screening.
- Treatment includes:
  - Non-sedating antihistamine in the morning (may increase the dose if necessary)
  - May add Benadryl at night if needed
  - May add histamine blocker such as Zantac (over the counter)
  - May add Singulair
  - May add oral steroids
- If hives persist:
  - Discontinue vitamins, laxatives, antacids, toothpaste, cigarettes, cosmetics and all toiletries, chewing gum, household cleaning solutions and aerosols.
  - Stop fruits, tomatoes, nuts, eggs, shellfish, chocolate, alcohol, milk, cheese, bread, diet drinks and junk foods.
  - Avoid all processed and pre-packaged foods (anything that has a label).
  - Consider trying a highly restrictive diet (lamb and rice).