



Urticaria (Hives)

What are hives?

- Hives are raised, red, blanching areas of skin that are itchy.
- Hives are categorized as acute (lasting <6 weeks) or chronic (lasting > 6 weeks).

What causes hives?

Acute Hives:

- Viral infection, foods, medications, or aeroallergens (such as pollen and animal dander)

Chronic hives:

- **Chronic Inducible (Physical) Urticaria**
 - **Cold Urticaria:** may be more notable in the winter or while swimming
 - **Cholinergic Urticaria:** triggered by increase in body temperature
 - **Dermatographic Urticaria:** triggered by applying pressure to the skin
 - **Solar urticaria:** triggered by sun exposure
- **Chronic Spontaneous (Idiopathic) Urticaria**
 - Hives > 6 weeks with no identifiable trigger

How do you diagnose hives?

- The presence of hives are diagnosed on physical exam.
- The underlying explanation for why the hives are present is determined by:
 - A detailed history

- Physical exam
- Laboratory testing
- Once the hives are resolved and if there is a suspicion of an allergic cause, skin testing or laboratory testing can be performed.
- Laboratory testing for chronic hives can include testing for blood disorders, thyroid function, autoimmune conditions (such as Lupus or Rheumatoid Arthritis), and certain infections (such as Lyme Disease, H. Pylori infection, and Group A Streptococcus). Additional tests are ordered based on the history and physical exam.

How are hives treated?

- Antihistamines
 - Fast acting antihistamines such as Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) may be used to treat hives when they first appear. These antihistamines may cause drowsiness.
 - Long acting antihistamines such as Zyrtec, Allegra, Claritin, or Xyzal may be used if hives continue to occur. These antihistamines are less likely to cause sedation.
- H2 blockers such as Pepcid (Famotidine)
 - Traditionally these medications are used to treat heartburn or peptic ulcer disease, but they are often used in conjunction with long acting antihistamines for the treatment of hives.
- Singulair (Montelukast)
- Xolair (Omalizumab)
 - Xolair is a subcutaneous injection that is administered in the office once monthly for the treatment of chronic spontaneous (idiopathic) urticaria in patients 12 years of age or older that are not well controlled on daily antihistamines.

If you or your child are experiencing acute or chronic hives, please call our office or schedule an appointment online.

**Riverdale office: 973-248-9199
Paramus office: 201-523-9797**

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