

FAIRFIELD COUNTY ALLERGY, ASTHMA & IMMUNOLOGY ASSOCIATES, P.C.

ADULT AND PEDIATRIC ALLERGY, ASTHMA AND CLINICAL IMMUNOLOGY

DIPLOMATES OF THE AMERICAN BOARD OF ALLERGY & IMMUNOLOGY

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URTICARIA

Urticaria (hives) are characterized by itchy, red, circumscribed flat or raised lesions of the skin. Each hive usually comes and goes and does not persist in a given location for more than 24 hours. As many as 20% of the population will experience urticaria at some time in their lives.

CHRONIC urticaria is defined as recurring hives for more than 6 weeks duration. In at least 80% of cases, a suspect cause is UNIDENTIFIABLE. Occasionally, underlying illness may cause urticaria (For example, infection or thyroid dysfunction).

ACUTE urticaria (defined as occurring for less than 6 weeks duration) is most commonly caused by:

- (1) Medication - more commonly: aspirin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID), antibiotics (penicillin, sulfa drugs), ACE inhibitors
- (2) Food – more commonly: egg, milk, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanut, citrus fruits, strawberries, tomato
- (3) Contact or inhalant sources: cats, dogs, horses, feathers, house dust, molds, grass and weeds.
- (4) Insect stings
- (5) Viral infection

TREATMENT

If the offending trigger has been identified, removal or avoidance is the best treatment. For both acute and chronic urticaria, antihistamine therapy remains the mainstay of medical treatment. The goal of long-term management is to obtain the best relief of symptoms with the least amount of medication. Often times it is necessary to try several different medications until the right combination is achieved. If symptoms are severe, and control is not achieved by antihistamines alone or in combination, oral corticosteroids may be prescribed.

DERMATOGRAPHISM

Is a type of physical urticaria in which stroking or scratching of the skin elicits an urticarial-type rash. Additional types of physical urticaria include delayed-pressure, solar heat-induced and cold-induced. About 10% of chronic hives have a physical trigger.

ANGIOEDEMA

Many people with chronic urticaria also suffer from angioedema. Angioedema is a deep swelling under the skin which may occur around the eyes, lips, hands, feet and throat. It may also occur in the gastrointestinal tract, causing abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. This condition could be life-threatening if inside of the throat or respiratory system is affected.