

Hives (Urticaria)

Hives are raised, red welts or spots, usually itchy, that come and go, on the arms/legs, torso, hands, feet and face. There are many possible causes of hives, including: allergic reactions (to foods, medications, chemical products or other environmental allergens), or infections (viruses, for example). The cause may not be determined in some cases.

This is what you can do to help the symptoms:

- Avoid any potential allergic cause. If the rash is due to a medication allergy, you should never take this medication again. If it is due to a food, avoid that food from now on.
- Avoid hot showers, as this can aggravate the rash. A cool shower may help.
- Avoid scratching, keep your nails short.
- Avoid tight fitting clothes that rub.
- Avoid exposure to the sun.

For treatment, you can use:

- A non-sedating antihistamine, such as fexofenadine (Allegra), loratadine (Claritin), or cetirizine (Zyrtec), as directed.
- You can also take Benadryl, 25 to 50 mg orally every 6 hours. This can cause drowsiness, and may help with sleep if you are itching at night.
- In more severe cases, an oral steroid such as prednisone may also be prescribed.

Return or seek medical attention immediately if you have:

- Symptoms of a severe allergic reaction, such as mouth or tongue swelling, difficulty breathing, lightheadedness or vomiting.
- A changing or worsening rash: blisters, purple dots or bruises, or any involvement of your mouth or eyes, pain with urination, or if the rash is not improving with treatment.

The hives can come and go (they can recur if you stop treatment, or after a hot shower) but should resolve completely within 1 or 2 weeks. If not, then you should return to be checked by your health care provider.

Check our website: www.uhs.berkeley.edu to learn more about this medical concern or others.

For an appointment www.uhs.berkeley.edu or call **510-642-2000** Clinic Nurse **510-643-7197** for advice