



## Hives (Urticaria)

### What are hives?

Hives are itchy, raised pink or red bumps with pale centers. These spots often resemble mosquito bites and can be different shapes and sizes. Hives can occur all over the body, or they may be localized to one area. The location and appearance of the rash frequently changes, often within a matter of hours. Hives do not spread from person to person. Most commonly, they come and go for a few days before spontaneously resolving. More than two-thirds of all cases completely go away within six weeks.

### What causes hives?

Most cases of hives in children result from a response to an infection, most commonly a virus. An allergic reaction to a medication, food, plant, detergent or other substance can also cause this type of rash. Foods that are most often associated with hives include: peanuts, tree nuts, egg whites, shellfish, milk, and sesame. Bee stings and insect bites can also result in hives. It is important to note that, in many cases, the exact cause of the rash cannot be determined. If your child's doctor suspects a serious allergy, then further testing and/or referral to a specialist may be indicated.

### How do I care for my child?

Treatment for hives often consists of supportive care.

- Give your child an antihistamine medication. This medicine won't cure the hives, but it will help the itching and reduce the number of hives. Use the specific medication recommended by your child's doctor. Continue the medicine until you are sure the hives are completely gone for 24 hours. Otherwise your child may get itchy again.
- Apply cool compresses to the area of itching and swelling to help relieve symptoms.
- Avoid heat and washing with hot water. This can make hives worse.
- Make sure your child stays away from anything you think may have caused the hives.

Additional interventions may be necessary if it appears that internal parts of the body are involved in the allergic reaction. If your child is wheezing or having trouble breathing or swallowing, you should seek emergency treatment.

### When should I seek medical treatment?

Call 911 or go to the Emergency Room if your child has the following:

- Wheezing or difficulty breathing
- Rapid onset cough or hoarseness
- Difficulty swallowing or speaking
- History of severe life-threatening allergic reaction to a similar substance

Call your child's doctor immediately if your child has the following:

- Severe hives (eye/lip swelling, very itchy, etc)
- Abdominal pain, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Acting very sick

Call your child's doctor during office hours if:

- The rash has not significantly improved after taking an antihistamine for 24 hours
- You have additional questions or concerns