

Urticaria

Patient information



- **The symptoms:** itchy, often red bumps that fully heal. The symptoms usually occur spontaneously but can sometimes be triggered by factors such as friction or physical exertion.
- **The cause:** often unknown.
- **The treatment:** antihistamines, often several times a day.

What is urticaria?

Urticaria (Urtica = nettle) is the medical term for hives. It is characterized by intense itching and a rash that develops rapidly. Often, it looks like a mosquito bite or like you have touched nettles. The spots can appear all over the body, sometimes simultaneously. A spot usually disappears within a few hours, and almost always within 24 hours. A new spot can appear somewhere else which makes it seem like the spot is moving. Urticaria is common. Approximately 1 in 5 people experience it at some point, and this can happen at any age. When symptoms persist for less than 6 weeks, it is termed acute urticaria. If symptoms persist for more than 6 weeks, it is referred to as chronic urticaria.

Causes of urticaria

Urticaria is almost always caused by a spontaneous dysregulation of mast cells. A specific cause is usually not identified, making additional testing for allergic triggers futile in most cases. The dysregulation of mast cells releases histamine, which can cause both the welts and itching on the skin. In some cases, specific triggers such as medications, infections, physical exertion, and friction on the skin may play a role in the onset or exacerbation of urticaria.

Nutrition

Patients often inquire about the role of food in developing urticaria or the possibility of histamine intolerance. Unfortunately, research has shown that this is almost never the case. Therefore, testing and avoiding specific foods are not useful. The histamine released during urticaria is produced by the body itself and does not result from sensitivity or intolerance to histamine in food. Following a so-called histamine-low or histamine-free diet is not meaningful.

Types of chronic urticaria

There are two types of urticaria:

- **Chronic spontaneous urticaria:** Most people have this type of urticaria. Symptoms occur 'out of the blue' and no cause can be found.
- **Chronic inducible urticaria:** With this type of urticaria, symptoms can be triggered by specific physical stimuli. For example, friction (dermographism), pressure, cold, heat, physical exertion, water, and vibrations.

Both types of urticaria can exist simultaneously. Sometimes, swelling of the lips or eyelids occurs. This is referred to as angioedema.

Treatment of urticaria

It is recommended to avoid physical stimuli that trigger urticaria as much as possible. In addition, antihistamine tablets are the main medications used in the treatment of urticaria. In some cases, it may be necessary to take multiple tablets per day. Most people are symptom-free with this approach. In rare cases, other types of medication may be needed to control the symptoms. For chronic urticaria, long-term medication use is often necessary.

What are the prospects?

In most cases, symptoms disappear spontaneously after a few months. Sometimes, the symptoms can persist for several years. Unfortunately, this is difficult to predict. Consistent use of antihistamine tablets appears to promote recovery.

Insurance coverage

DC Klinieken has contracts with all health insurers. This means that almost all healthcare costs are covered, similar to the hospital. However, you will need a referral from your general practitioner. Please be aware of your insurance excess. For more information about reimbursement and possible exceptions, please visit: www.dcklinieken.nl/vergoedingen.

Questions

For more information and answers to frequently asked questions, please visit: www.dcklinieken.nl/contact or contact our Service and Information Centre at +31 (0) 88 0100 900.

Emergency after visiting DC Klinieken

In case of emergency, call: +31 (0) 88 0100 998.

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