

Urticaria or hives

Easy to confuse with more serious illnesses

Childhood rashes are very common and often nothing to worry about. Most rashes are harmless and go away on their own.

Urticaria or hives is a raised, red, itchy rash that appears on the skin. It can be frightening especially if you don't know the cause. It happens when a trigger causes a protein called histamine to be released in the skin. Histamine causes redness, swelling and itching, the rash can be limited to one part of the body or spread across large areas of the body. It can sometimes be confused with other types of more serious rashes such as meningitis.

Urticaria is common and can be triggered by many things, including a viral infection. Less often it may be allergens (such as food or latex), irritants (such as nettles), medicines or physical factors, such as exercise or heat. Usually no cause can be identified. The rash is usually short lived and mild, and in many cases does not need treatment as the rash often gets better within a few days. If it is very itchy, a medication called antihistamine usually helps. Creams can help with the itching and are available over-the-counter at pharmacies. Speak to your pharmacist for advice. (See allergies).

GP says

Some things which can trigger urticaria should be avoided where possible, these include:

- Food such as peanuts, shellfish, eggs.
- Environmental factors such as pollen, dust mites or chemicals.
- Insect bites and stings.
- Emotional stress.
- Some medications - but do not stop any prescribed medicines without speaking to your GP.
- Physical triggers such as pressure to the skin, change in temperature, sunlight, exercise or water.

Source: www.nhs.uk/conditions/skin-rash-children

Foods to avoid:

There is controversy over the role of diet in people with long-term hives. There are two groups of chemicals in some foods that may trigger urticaria. It is important to discuss your child's diet with your health visitor.

Possible triggers:

- Shellfish
- Strawberries, bananas, mangoes, pumpkin, tangerines, kiwi
- Tomatoes, peas
- Fish
- Chocolate

- Pineapple

Cut down on:

- Spices
- Orange juice
- Raspberries
- Tea

Source: Allergy UK

1

My child has developed itchy red spots.

2

It can be difficult to identify what has triggered the rash. Try to think about any new or different foods they have had.

3

If itching persists ask your pharmacist about antihistamine medication.