

Chronic spontaneous urticaria and angioedema

What is Chronic spontaneous Urticaria and angioedema?

This is a condition in which an individual develops hives and swelling every day to a few times a week for months to years. It is not due to a food allergy. In many people, it is due to an autoimmune process (This is where the body produces antibodies, which normally helps fight infections, but are now attacking the allergy cells and triggering them causing the hives and swelling). This condition does not lead to any harm to your body. However, experiencing hives and swelling can significantly impact an individual's quality-of-life, interfering with their sleep, work, school and leisure activities. The condition is self-limiting and will subside within months to years.

What can make my hives/angioedema worse?

Although this is not a food/medication allergy, hives and swelling can be exacerbated by alcohol, NSAIDs (anti-inflammatory drugs like Advil, Motrin, ibuprofen, naproxen, Anaprox, Voltaren, diclofenac...) and therefore these should be avoided. Stress can also exacerbate the hives.

Is there a cure for chronic spontaneous urticaria and angioedema?

Unfortunately, at this time there is no cure for the condition. The condition is managed by suppressing the hives until it naturally subsides.

What can I take to treat my symptoms?

The following non-sedating antihistamines can be used to suppress the hives and swelling. A higher dose than what is written on the packaging is often required to maintain adequate control. If one of the antihistamines below does not seem to be effective, even at the higher dose, then switch to another antihistamine.

Claritin (loratadine) 10 mg - 1-2 tablets twice per day

Aerius (desloratadine) - 5 mg 1-2 tablets twice per day

Allegra 24-hour 120 mg - 1-2 tablets twice per day

Reactine (cetirizine) 10 mg - 1-2 tablets twice per day

Reactine (cetirizine) 20 mg - 1-2 tablets per day (prescription only)

Blexten 20 mg - 1-2 tablets twice per day (prescription only)

Rupall 10 mg - 1-2 tablets twice per day (prescription only)

The antihistamines need to be taken on a daily basis to suppress the development of the hives and swelling. They are not as effective if taken after the hives develop. At the higher doses of some of the antihistamines can cause some sedation. **Note: do not take sedating antihistamines such as Atarax, Benadryl or chlorpheniramine for your hives/angioedema as you may experience significant side effects including drowsiness, cardiac arrhythmias, constipation, dry eyes or dry mouth.**

If antihistamines are not effective, then your doctor can discuss other options.