

## Itchy Hives!!

Have you ever eaten something and then a little while later broke out in some reddish bumps and patches on your arms, legs or back? If you have, then you have probably had hives. Yuck!

The medical term for hives is urticaria. Hives are pink or red bumps that sometimes have a pale center or are raised patches of skin. They usually itch but they can also burn or sting. Hives can occur anywhere on the body and vary in size. They can be small like a bug bite or large like a saucer. They also may look like rings or groups or rings joined together. In other words, they can appear in clusters and also may change locations on your body.

About 10 to 25% of people get hives at least once in their lives. They are uncomfortable and usually harmless. But they can be a sign of a serious allergic reaction. So if you think you have them, you need to tell a responsible adult immediately.

When a person is exposed to something that can trigger hives, certain cells in the body release histamine and other substances. This causes fluid to leak from the small blood vessels under the skin. When this fluid collects under the skin, it forms the blotches called hives.

**There is more than one reason to get hives. Here are a few:**

- A common reason is an allergic reaction. Some triggers are foods like eggs, shellfish, berries and nuts, medications and insect bites or stings.
- Exposure to very cold temperatures or very hot temperatures
- Sun exposure
- Stress or being nervous
- Infections caused by viruses

No matter what the cause is, hives can last for a few minutes, a few hours or even days. Sometimes you need to see the doctor. After hearing your story and examining you, your doctor can try to help figure out what might be causing your hives. If you keep getting them, your doctor may send you to an allergist. The doctor may also suggest you take a type of medicine called an antihistamine to relieve the itchiness.

Not as often, hives can be a sign or a more serious allergy. Some kids who know they have serious allergies carry a special medicine to use in an emergency. This medicine called epinephrine is given by a shot.



Many adults and kids carry this emergency shot with them and know how to use it just in case.

How can I prevent hives? You can prevent them if you know what causes the hives. If its from food, you avoid that food. If you get them from being nervous, relaxation breathing exercises may help. However, if you don't know why you get hives, you can't prevent them.

The good news is that hives usually aren't serious. You may even grow out of them!