

# Urticaria or hives

## Easy to confuse with more serious illness

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.

Hives can be triggered by many things, including allergens (such as food or latex), irritants (such as nettles), medicines or physical factors, such as exercise or heat. But usually no cause can be identified. It's a common skin reaction that's likely to affect children. 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 you're struggling with it, a medication called antihistamine usually helps. Creams help with the itching and are available over-the-counter at pharmacies. Speak to your Pharmacist for advice.

### GP says

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

- Food such as peanuts, shellfish, eggs and cheese.
- Environmental factors such as pollen, dust mites or chemicals.
- Insect bites and stings.
- Emotional stress.
- Some medications - do not stop any prescribed medicines before you speak to your Health Visitor or GP.
- Physical triggers such as pressure to the skin, change in temperature, sunlight, exercise or water.

Source: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/skin-rash-children](http://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.

#### Avoid:

- 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 GP about antihistamine medication.