



Hives

Patient and Family Education

What are hives?

Hives are spots or welts from an allergic reaction to something that a child has been exposed to. They are usually red, raised and very itchy. Hives can come and go, lasting from a few hours to a few days.

What causes hives?

Most of the time, no cause is found. Some causes may include:

- Medicines
- Foods, including common foods like chocolate, cola, eggs, food coloring, peanuts, milk, tomatoes, fresh fruit and fish
- Paints and dyes, pets, plants, makeup, art supplies, soaps and detergents
- Extreme heat, cold or stress
- Viral illness

What is the treatment?

There is no treatment needed unless the rash bothers your child. Some general guidelines to follow for itching include:

- Antihistamines prescribed by your child's doctor
- Cool, wet compresses
- Calamine lotion
- Oatmeal baths
- A handful of baking soda added to a lukewarm bath

When should I call the doctor?

Call 911 or take your child to the nearest emergency department right away if he shows signs of a severe allergic reaction. These signs might include:

- Swelling of the mouth, eyes or face
- Breathing problems such as wheezing or cough
- Chest tightness
- Hoarseness
- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Sweating
- Stomachache or vomiting

Call your child's doctor if:

- Your child is still very uncomfortable after having used antihistamines or other treatments.
- The rash has changed.
- He develops a temperature over 100.3°F or other symptoms.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child's doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children's Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404-250-KIDS.