



# Hives

## Patient and Family Education

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**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Your child's doctor or a member of your child's health care team will talk with you about specific care for your child.**

### **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 emotional stress
- Viral illness
- Excess pressure on the skin
- Exercise

### **What is the treatment?**

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

- Remove the cause if known
- Antihistamines and other medicines prescribed by your child's doctor. Give them exactly as prescribed.
- To decrease itching, you may use:
  - Cool, wet compresses
  - Calamine lotion
  - Oatmeal baths
  - A handful of baking soda added to a lukewarm bath
- If your child often has a problem with hives, keep a log or journal of what he ate or did right before the hives occurred. Show the log to your child's doctor. It may help your doctor find a cause for the hives.

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

# Hives, continued

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## **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 such as :

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

Call your child's doctor if your child:

- Is still uncomfortable after using the antihistamines or other treatments
- Has a change in what the hives look like or feel like
- Has a fever (a temperature over 100.3°F)
- Has any other symptoms or the hives continue to be a problem

Also call your child's doctor if you have questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

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