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Chronic Urticaria



What are Urticaria and Angioedema?

Certain cells in the body, called mast cells, can become activated and release chemicals (such as Histamine and Bradykinin) into your bloodstream.

These chemicals make your small blood vessels enlarge and become leaky. Fluid then leaks out from the vessels into the surface of the skin.

Urticaria, also known as “hives”, develops when the swelling occurs on the surface of the skin.

Urticaria appears as red, itchy bumps on the skin’s surface. These may come in different shapes and sizes, appearing in different parts of the body.

Angioedema occurs when swelling develops in the deeper layers of the skin. The swelling can happen around the eyes, on the lips and tongue, and even internally in the windpipe. This may last for about 48 to 72 hours.

Urticaria and angioedema commonly occur together but may also occur separately.

What is Chronic Urticaria?

In chronic urticaria, the hives last for more than 6 weeks.

Chronic urticaria can be classified as:

- Chronic Spontaneous Urticaria, when there are no triggers identified. This is the most common type of chronic urticaria
- Chronic Inducible Urticaria, when the urticaria is triggered by physical factors such as heat, cold, pressure, or vibration.

Chronic urticaria is not a life-threatening or contagious condition, and can easily be treated in most people.

In rare cases, chronic urticaria may be caused by certain medical conditions such as such as thyroid disorders, blood disorders (e.g. leukemia or lymphoma) and certain autoimmune diseases. If you are newly diagnosed with chronic urticaria, your doctor may advise you to undergo some blood tests to exclude these conditions.

How is Chronic Urticaria treated?

Treatment of chronic urticaria involves identifying and avoiding triggers, as well as using medications.

In the case of chronic urticaria, your doctor will advise using second-generation antihistamine tablets regularly.

For those who do not respond to this treatment, your doctor may recommend a drug called Omalizumab. Omalizumab is a biologic drug-administered as a monthly subcutaneous injection under the skin. Treatment with Omalizumab is usually required for 6 months.

If the above medication does not work, your doctor may consider options like immunosuppressants or immunomodulators to help manage your symptoms.

Urticaria management aims to find a safe treatment plan to help control your hives.