

HIVES AND "HIVELIKE" BREAKOUTS

Most patients are familiar with the term hives. It typically presents as itchy, raised "welts" which can occur nearly anywhere on the body including the scalp, groin, hands, and feet. In dermatology, we use the term urticaria when referring to hives. Despite popular belief, most cases of hives are not due to an allergy. Instead, they most often arise for no identifiable reason at all.

Medicines called antihistamines are the primary treatment used for hives. The most wellknown antihistamine is Benadryl, although there are a number of other prescription and overthecounter versions.

What many people don't realize is that there are other types of antihistamines that are usually used for control of stomach acid. These would include medicines like cimetidine (Tagamet) and ranitidine (Zantac). Even though these medications are usually used for control of upset stomach or ulcers, they can be particularly helpful when someone has difficult to control hives.

The first goal we have with treating hives is to simply relieve the inflammation and itching. After doing so, most cases resolve on their own without further testing. If needed, other tests such as a biopsy or allergy testing may be considered. But again, most of the time, no specific cause is found and ultimately we just have to allow time for the hives to quit flaring on their own.

YOUR TREATMENT PLAN

- 1) **Please do your best to avoid any activity which stimulates blood flow to the surface of the skin.** Avoid hot temperatures including hot baths and showers. Even scratching and rubbing can also make the hives flare worse!
- 2) Although allergens usually don't play a role, if there is a strong suspicion that a certain allergen did cause you to breakout, then you should definitely do your best to avoid it (at least until you know for sure).
- 3) Aspirin and other "NSAIDs" (such as Advil, Aleve, etc.) can contribute to hives. If you are taking any such medications, please consider discontinuing their use. NOTE: If you're prescribed aspirin by your PCP or heart doctor, we would ask that you seek their approval before stopping it.
- 4) For treatment, the key is to provide ongoing coverage of the recommended medications throughout the day. We're recommending the following medications:

Morning

Afternoon

Evening