

What is it?

Hives (urticaria) is a type of itchy skin rash. The raised bumps (wheals) appear when skin cells release chemicals such as histamine. They can vary in size, and may look white or red. Each wheal can last a few minutes or several hours and may change shape.

Many things can trigger hives, including food, medication, latex, insect bites and viruses. Often, the specific cause of hives is not found, and the rash resolves by itself. Sometimes the wheals last a long time (chronic urticaria). This may be caused by another underlying medical condition.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will ask questions to help find out what triggered your hives. Your GP may also:

- Do blood tests to find an underlying cause
- Prescribe you medicine to help clear up the rash, and help with itching
- Discuss what triggers you can avoid
- Refer you to a specialist (dermatologist or immunologist), if necessary

Your GP will refer you to the Emergency Department immediately if they think you are having a serious allergic reaction.

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may want to see you again in a week or so to see how the rash is going with or without treatment. If there is no great change in the rash, your GP may:

- Do further blood tests
- Increase the dose of your medication, or change medications
- Refer you to a specialist, if necessary

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- Will medication help?
- What could I be allergic to?
- What tests do I need?
- How can I stop the rash coming back?



What can I do?

Avoid known triggers as discussed with your GP.

Avoid things that aggravate the rash such as hot temperatures, stress or alcohol. Take your medication as directed by your GP.

What supports are available?

The Liverpool Hospital Dermatology Department can help people with complex skin conditions: **8738 4560**

You can also ask your GP for a referral to a private allergy or dermatology specialist.

Where can I find more information?

- Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) – allergy and the skin: allergy.org.au
- Sydney Children's Hospitals Network – urticaria: schn.health.nsw.gov.au
- Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPAH) – information sheet: slhd.nsw.gov.au