

DEFINITION

- Very itchy rash
- Raised pink spots with pale centers (hives look like mosquito bites.)
- Size range of ½ inch to several inches across
- Shapes quite variable
- Rapid and repeated changes of location, size, and shape

Cause

Widespread hives are an allergic reaction to a food, drug, viral infection, insect bite, or a host of other substances. Often the cause is not found. Localized hives are usually due to skin contact with plants, pollen, food or pet saliva. Localized hives are not caused by drugs, infections or swallowed foods. Hives are not contagious.

Expected Course

More than 10% of children get hives. Most children who develop hives have it only once. The hives come and go for 3 or 4 days and then mysteriously disappear. Large swellings are common around the eyes, lips, and genitals if hives occur there. Some young children become sensitized to mosquito or flea bites. They develop big hives (called papular urticaria) at the sites of old and new bites that can last for months.

HOME TREATMENT

Antihistamine Medicine. The best drug for hives is an antihistamine. An antihistamine won't cure the hives, but it will reduce their number and relieve itching. Benadryl, one of the most commonly used drugs for hives, has recently become available without prescription. The main side effect of this drug is drowsiness. If you have another antihistamine (e.g., any drug for hay fever) at home, you can use it if you know the dosage until you can get some Benadryl. Give Benadryl four times daily in the following dosages:

BENADRYL DOSAGE

Child's weight more than (lb)	22	33	44	55	110
Total amount (mg)	10	15	20	25	50
Liquid 12.5 mg/5 mL (tsp)	¾	1	1½	2	—
Chewable 12.5 mg	—	1	1½	2	4
Capsules 25 mg	—	—	—	1	2

Your child's drug is _____.

Give _____ every _____ hours. Continue the medicine until the hives are completely gone for 24 hours.

Itching. Give a cool bath to relieve itching. Rub very itchy areas with an ice cube for 10 minutes.

Avoidance. Avoid anything you think might have caused the hives. For hives triggered by pollen or animal contact, take a cool shower or bath. For localized hives, wash the allergic substance off the skin with soap and water. If itchy, massage the area with a cold washcloth or ice for 10 minutes. Localized hives usually disappear in a few hours and don't need Benadryl.

Common Mistakes in Treatment of Hives. Many parents wait to give the antihistamine until new hives have appeared. This means your child will become itchy again. The purpose of the medicine is to keep your child comfortable until the hives go away. Therefore give the medicine regularly until you are sure the hives are completely gone. Since hives are not contagious, your child can be with other children.



CALL OUR OFFICE

IMMEDIATELY if

- Breathing or swallowing becomes difficult.
- Your child starts acting very sick.

During regular hours if

- The itch is not controlled after your child has been taking continuous antihistamines for 24 hours.
- The hives last more than 1 week.
- You have other concerns or questions.