



Hives

Symptoms

- Raised pink [bumps](#) with pale centers (welts)
- Hives look like mosquito bites
- Sizes of hives vary from ½ inch (12 mm) to several inches (cm) across
- Shapes of hives are variable and change repeatedly
- Itchy rash

Causes

- Widespread hives usually are caused by a viral infection. Can also be an [allergic reaction](#) to a food, drug, infection, insect bite, or other substances. Often, the cause is not found. Hives from foods usually resolve in 6 hours.
- 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.

Care Advice

1. Localized Hives:
 - a. For localized hives, wash the allergic substance off the skin with soap and water.
 - b. If itchy, massage the area with a cold pack or ice for 20 minutes.
 - c. Localized hives usually disappear in a few hours and don't need Benadryl.
2. **BENADRYL** for Widespread Hives:
 - a. Give Benadryl 4 times per day for widespread hives that itch (no prescription needed).
 - b. If you only have another antihistamine at home (but not Benadryl), use that.
 - c. Continue the Benadryl 4 times per day until the hives are gone for 12 hours.
 - d. Contraindication: Age is under 1 year (Reason: Benadryl is a sedative). Give your [doctor](#) a call for advice.
3. **FOOD-RELATED HIVES:**
 - a. Foods can cause widespread hives
 - b. Sometimes the hives are isolated to just around the mouth
 - c. Hives from foods usually are transient and gone in under 6 hours
4. **COOL BATH:** Give a cool bath for 10 minutes to relieve itching. (Caution: avoid causing a chill) Rub very itchy areas with an ice cube for 10 minutes.
5. **REMOVE ALLERGENS:** Give a bath or shower if triggered by pollens or animal contact. Change clothes.

6. **AVOID ALLERGENS:** If you identify a substance that causes hives (e.g., a food), help your child avoid that substance in the future.
7. **CONTAGIOUSNESS:**
 - a. Hives are not contagious.
 - b. Your child can return to child care or school if the hives do not interfere with normal activities.
 - c. If the hives are associated with an infection, your child can return to school after the fever is gone and your child feels well enough to participate in normal activities.
8. **Expected Course:** Hives from a viral illness normally come and go for 3 or 4 days, then disappear. Most children get hives once.

When To Call

Call 911 Now (your child may need an ambulance) If

- Difficulty breathing or wheezing
- Hoarseness or cough with rapid onset
- Difficulty swallowing, drooling or slurred speech with rapid onset
- Severe life-threatening allergic reaction in the past to similar substance

Call Your Doctor Now (night or day) If

- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Hives began after a [bee sting](#), medicine or high-risk food (e.g., peanuts or fish) and no previous reactions
- Age under 1 year with widespread hives

Call Your Doctor Within 24 Hours (between 8 am and 4 pm) If

- You think your child needs to be seen
- Severe hives (eyes swollen shut, very itchy, etc.) not improved after 2nd dose of Benadryl
- Fever or joint swelling is present
- Abdominal pain or vomiting present

Call Your Doctor During Weekday Office Hours If

- You have other questions or concerns
- Hives interfere with school or normal activities after taking Benadryl every 6 hours for more than 24 hours
- Food suspected as cause
- Hives have occurred 3 or more times and cause is unknown

- Hives last over 1 week

Adapted from The American Academy of Pediatrics (2011) at www.healthychildren.org