

Recurrent Wheals (Urticaria)

1. What is urticaria?

- Recurrent, intensely itchy wheals occurring throughout the body.
- It is a common skin condition and one in every 5 people has a life time risk of developing the disease.
- This is non-infectious and can affect both adults and children.

2. How does Urticaria occur?

- This due to the release of histamine and other chemicals from a special cell type with in the skin called mast cells.
- Most of the time this occurs without specific underlying cause and blood tests often fail to show any abnormality.
- At other times, urticaria may occur due to various drugs, food items, vaccines, infections, exercise, sweating, sunlight, extremes of temperature and due to physical factors such as pressure.

3. What are the clinical features?

- There will be intensely itchy bumps (similar to mosquito bites or larger lesions) throughout your body.
- These bumps will disappear within a few hours (never last beyond 24 hours) without leaving any sign of the disease.
- There will be recurrent episodes of similar lesions. The disease duration varies from weeks to months and rarely to several years.
- Sometimes there will be swellings involving the eyelids, lips, hands and feet along with skin lesions.
- Rarely patient may develop faintishness, breathing difficulties, swallowing difficulties and changes in voice.

4. How to diagnose the disease?

- An experienced doctor can come to the diagnosis by history taking and clinical examination.
- Rarely may it require special blood tests.

5. What are the treatment options?

- Patients with urticarial must be careful when using painkillers such as aspirin and morphine
- If you can identify the trigger factors that will precipitate urticaria, those should be avoided.
- There are effective medications to control the symptoms (antihistamines).
- Sometimes it may require long term treatment (several months or years) to control the disease.
- Therefore, it is important to continue with the treatment as directed by your doctor.



- If the skin condition is caused by or worsened by sunlight, water or sweat, try to control those conditions as much as possible.

6. Is urticaria dangerous?

- Generally, this is not life threatening.
- But some patients may develop swelling around the lips, chest tightness, difficulty in breathing and faintishness (Angioedema)
- If you tend to develop above symptoms, it is important to get admitted to the nearest hospital as early as possible.

