

Urticaria

Urticaria - sometimes known as hives, nettle rash or welts – is an **itchy rash that can affect any area of the body**. It is thought that **1 in 6 people** will experience acute (short-term) urticaria at some point in their life, and the condition will often clear up by itself in a few days.

Chronic (long-term) urticaria affects **around 1 in 1,000 people**, however, and women are twice as likely to be affected as men. It can affect children and adults, and is especially prevalent in those with a history of allergies.

Urticaria Causes & Triggers

Urticaria is caused when the body creates a high level of histamine as a result of a trigger, such as:

- an allergic reaction to environmental triggers like pollen, chemicals or dust mites
- an infection such as a cold or the flu
- exposure to heat, cold and sunlight
- certain chemicals like latex or metals
- foods like nuts or shellfish
- insect bites
- exercise causing perspiration or rubbing of clothing
- medication side effects
- an underlying medical condition

In some cases, urticaria can be the first sign of anaphylaxis, so if you go on to experience any difficulty breathing, feel faint or nauseous, or have swelling around the mouth or eyes, then dial 999 immediately.

There are some triggers that many chronic urticaria sufferers acknowledge make their condition worse. These include:

- stress and anxiety
- drinking caffeine or alcohol
- humid conditions and hot temperatures

Urticaria Treatments

In many acute cases, the cause of urticaria is not known, but those with chronic urticaria will usually begin to see patterns in their symptoms and can often identify their own triggers. Your GP may suggest you be allergy tested, and you may be prescribed antihistamines, steroids or cortisoids. Some of these treatments can be harsh for sensitive skins, and steroids can cause thinning and discolouration, so you may choose to seek natural alternatives.



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