

Chronic Hives (Urticaria) Quiz

Chronic hives (urticaria) are often misunderstood by patients and even medical providers. Unlike acute hives, which typically go away within hours to days, chronic hives last more than six weeks. Chronic hives are rarely caused by an “allergic reaction,” and patients are therefore frequently frustrated by the lack of identifiable cause for their hives. Nevertheless, there are safe and effective treatments for chronic hives. This short quiz provides patients with basic information on chronic hives, which will hopefully improve patient understanding and satisfaction with the diagnosis and treatment of this condition.

1. What is the most common cause of chronic hives?

- A. Food allergies
- B. No identifiable trigger
- C. Medications
- D. Lotions
- E. Pets

Although this can be frustrating for patients, chronic hives rarely have an identifiable external cause and are almost never caused by an allergy.

2. What medications are usually used as the first choice for treatment of hives?

- A. Steroid injections
- B. Allergy shots (immunotherapy)
- C. Antihistamines
- D. Topical creams
- E. Anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen

Antihistamines decrease the itching, frequency and severity of hives. Antihistamines are usually well tolerated, with drowsiness being the most common side effect.

3. What testing should be routinely done for a patient with chronic hives?

- A. Skin testing for allergies
- B. Skin biopsy
- C. Blood work
- D. No testing is usually necessary
- E. Genetic Testing

Since hives are not caused by an allergy and do not suggest the presence of underlying health concerns, testing is rarely needed. Most cases can be confirmed by the appearance and characteristics of the hives. Blood work or a skin biopsy may be helpful in a few cases.

4. Which of these is a bothersome aspect of chronic hives?

- A. Itching
- B. Cosmetic appearance
- C. Unpredictability
- D. Associated swelling
- E. All of the above

Hives are bothersome and frustrating for patients, which is why correct diagnosis and treatment is important.

5. What can individuals with chronic hives expect?

- A. Symptoms to get better on their own in months to years
- B. Risk for anaphylaxis
- C. Use of topical steroids for treatment
- D. Controlling symptoms by following a limited diet
- E. Treatment with allergy shots

Roughly 50% of cases of hives will resolve within a year, and more than 80% will resolve by five years. Appropriate treatment typically controls symptoms and improves quality of life.