



CHRONIC SPONTANEOUS URTICARIA

Patient information



Chronic spontaneous urticaria

What is urticaria?

Approximately one in ten people will experience an episode of hives, also known as urticaria, at some point in their lives. The hives appear within minutes and consist of red areas raised above skin level, forming an itchy rash.

Transient attacks, called 'acute urticaria', are most common and these are often seen in connection with infections or allergies. For acute urticaria, the symptoms disappear within a few days or weeks.

Unlike acute urticaria, chronic urticaria lasts for more than 6 weeks. If the symptoms occur without a triggering cause, such as cold or heat, it is termed 'chronic spontaneous urticaria', and this condition may in some patients last for several years.

“ Hives, also known as urticaria, is a type of itchy rash that resembles the skin reaction appearing after a close encounter with stinging nettles ”

What is causing chronic spontaneous urticaria?

Urticaria appears when a type of skin cells, called mast cells, become activated and release biologically active substances, including histamine. These substances lead to the characteristic symptoms of urticaria; redness, intense itching, and swelling. In chronic spontaneous urticaria, the mast cells are sometimes activated by auto-antibodies produced by our own immune system – a so-called autoimmune reaction. This type of chronic spontaneous urticaria is more difficult to treat and is characterized by a more prolonged disease course. The autoantibodies found in the blood can be detected by a laboratory test measuring histamine release from donor cells.

PATIENT INFORMATION DEVELOPED BY:

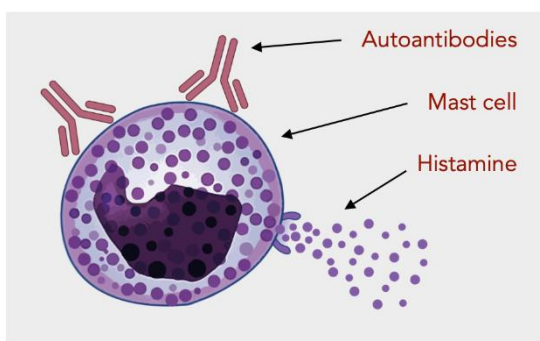


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What is the prevalence of chronic spontaneous urticaria?

Around 0.5-2% of the adult population suffers from chronic spontaneous urticaria, and the same frequency is seen in children.

Approximately 15% of these patients have autoantibodies in their blood, indicating the autoimmune type of chronic spontaneous urticaria.



Release of histamine from an activated mast cell

Is chronic spontaneous urticaria a sign of allergy?

The symptoms of chronic spontaneous urticaria are not caused by ingestion of food or a close contact with other allergens in our environment, such as perfume. If the symptoms are triggered by these factors, it may be a sign of an underlying allergy.

However, it is important to see a doctor to confirm or rule out the co-occurrence of an allergy in order to get the right treatment. The doctor's assessment may include testing for relevant allergies and the presence of autoantibodies in the blood.



Urticaria comes in many shapes and sizes – this is one example of how the wheals may look.

My doctor says I have a positive urticaria test – what now?

A positive laboratory test indicates the presence of autoantibodies, meaning that you have an autoimmune subtype of chronic spontaneous urticaria known as 'type IIb'. Please note that the final diagnosis is made by a medical specialist, who is also responsible for choosing the optimal treatment.

Because chronic spontaneous urticaria is a potentially debilitating disease, receiving the correct treatment is vital. High doses of antihistamines are used as first-line treatment, but biological treatments may be prescribed by your doctor if antihistamines are not sufficient. In some patients with autoantibodies, the full effect does not occur before one or two months of treatment.

Who are we?

About us

RefLab ApS is a private laboratory situated right in the heart of Copenhagen. We provide services such as allergy diagnostics to medical specialists and hospitals worldwide.

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