

**Cycle 6-Hives and Shoulder
2601 - All About Hives and the Treatment of Hives
SCRIPT**

(1)

WILLIAM CRAWFORD, MD:

Hives is a type of a rash. But hives are kind of unique in the world of rashes. The main things that separates hives from all the other kind of rashes that are out there. One is that hives tend to appear quickly, and then they disappear quickly. The other thing that makes hives unique is the best medicine to treat hives is actually a pill.

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MADelyn FERNSTROM:

Chronic hives are hives that keep returning randomly for one month or longer.

(3)

SANDY JUNG-WU, MD:

Hives are a little bit more complicated. When patients come in for hives, hives can be caused from a lot of different things. It can be caused from food. But it can also be-- caused from just your immune system having been activated.

(4)

WILLIAM CRAWFORD, MD:

There was an assumption made many, many years ago that's led to a lot of confusion, and misunderstanding about hives. And that assumption was that since hives can be an allergic rash, then hives must be an allergic rash. And that's what's incorrect. Because we now know from some great research that's been done recently that hives don't have to be an allergic rash.

For many people, if not most people, if they break out in hives it's because their immune system is attacking their own skin, attacking their own mast cells. And that's what's causing the hives to occur

(5)

MICHAEL LAND, MD:

Most cases of hives have to just run their course, and then they go away.

(6)

MADelyn FERNSTROM:

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology does not recommend allergy testing for episodes of hives that have lasted for several weeks or longer.

(7)

YANA SAMARASENA, MD:

Hives do go away. We know that the majority of people who have chronic hives, they will get better by themselves. The main role of the allergist once we see someone who has chronic hives is really to make sure that we control the symptoms of hives with different medications. Unfortunately, there's nothing you can rub on your hives to make them better. None of the creams that are available are helpful for hives because the problem is coming from the inside. So, we really need to use either injectable medication or oral medication.

(8)

WILLIAM CRAWFORD, MD:

When your immune system is attacking your skin to cause the hives it's attaching a particular type of a cell called mast cell. We all have mast cells scattered all throughout our body. Our mast cells contain a natural chemical called histamine. When your immune system attacks your mast cells the histamine gets released. When the histamine is released in your skin it causes the itchy,

bumpy, welty rash that-- that we call hives.

(9)

WILLIAM CRAWFORD, MD:

The medicines we like to use most often to treat hives are called antihistamine medications. Some examples would be Benadryl, also called diphenhydramine, Claritin, also called loratadine, Allegra, also called fexofenadine, and Zyrtec, also called cetirizine. All of these medicines work in the same way. If you're taking an antihistamine medicine your immune system will continue to attack your mast cells.

The mast cells will continue to release the histamine. But once the histamine gets released the antihistamine medication will block it, and prevent it from causing the hives, and the swelling.

(10)

AMBER BURNETTE, MD:

Most allergists will recommend that you take an allergy medicine every day to keep your hives under control and then we'll check again after a month or, you know, up to one to three months of no hives and try to wean you off the medicine and just see if it's gone.

(11)

MADelyn FERNSTROM:

Antihistamine medications are safe to take long term for treatment of hives. They can be taken every day for months, or even longer, without any concern for long term side effects.

(12)

YANA SAMARASENA, MD:

For chronic hives, the doses of the antihistamines have to be much higher than those that are used for other types of nasal allergies. Sometimes they can be up to four times the recommended dose for nasal allergies.

(13)

WILLIAM CRAWFORD, MD:

Another kind of medicine that we commonly use to treat hives is medicine that we call corticosteroids. Some people call these steroid medicines. These are pills that you take by mouth. Very commonly we use prednisone tablets. And they work by suppressing your overactive immune system.

Now, the steroids are strong medicines. They're not a good long term solution. We don't want to give them to you for a long period of time, because you may end up with side effects. But for a short period of time if your hives are terrible, and we need to give you something that's just going to get you comfortable as soon as possible, these medicines will work better than anything else.

(14)

AMBER BURNETTE, MD:

A trained physician or allergist will know what symptoms to worry about if the hives are worrisome in some way and need-- serious further evaluation. But most people's hives don't have a serious cause and with time will resolve on their own. So again, we focus on symptom management.

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