

# Urticaria

## Department of Dermatology

### Patient information

If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید، لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formacie, proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil, vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتنسيق يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

## Urticaria

Urticaria (Hives) is an itchy condition of the skin, which often appears for no apparent reason. The affected areas of skin are usually red; sometimes they are raised above the normal skin. These affected areas of skin often move from one area of the body to another over a period of hours and sometimes (especially on the face). The affected areas can become very swollen for a while. Usually the condition appears for a few days then goes away for a while, although sometimes the problem is more persistent. It is presumed that the cause of Urticaria in some people is a skin reaction to “foreign” chemicals or foreign proteins which may be in medications, food stuffs or by a variety of infections.

Unfortunately, there are no skin or blood tests which can indicate which of these possible causes may be responsible. Usually your doctor can rule out infections and medications as a cause.

In the vast majority of patients, all investigations are entirely normal and no detectable cause for Urticaria can be found.

To try to find out whether food/drink may be responsible for the Urticaria, the only practical approach is to keep a food diary i.e. keep a written account of what has been eaten for about a month. Then go back through the month and try to establish a relationship between attacks of Urticaria and particular food/drink during the previous 24 hours. If it is possible to find a suspect food/drink, then do not eat/drink it for a further month and see what happens.

Usually it is impossible to find a responsible food/drink unless it is very obvious from the start.

Very occasionally, special exclusion diets e.g. all dairy produce are of some help but these should only be performed with the help of a professional dietician.

In most patients, the cause of Urticaria is never found but as time goes by the condition gradually goes away. During the period that it takes to go away, many of the symptoms can be controlled by taking antihistamine tablets. These tablets are very safe and can normally be taken for prolonged periods of time if necessary (double check with your doctor if you might be pregnant). They sometimes have a side effect of drowsiness and can also interact with alcohol. Patients taking antihistamines should be extra careful when operating any form of machinery (especially driving a car) and should never do so if they have been drinking any alcohol.

If you have any queries about your skin problem, please make a note of them and ask your doctor on your next visit.

During your contact with us, it is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward/department Sister/Charge Nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

## Infection control request

Preventing infections is a crucial part of our patients' care. To ensure that our standards remain high our staff have regular infection prevention and control training and their practice is monitored in the workplace. We ask patients and visitors to assist us in preventing infections by cleaning their hands at regular intervals and informing staff of areas within the hospital that appear soiled.

As a patient there may be times that you are unsure whether a staff member has cleaned their hands; if in doubt please ask the staff member and they will be only too happy to put your mind at ease by cleaning their hands so that you can see them.

## Special instructions

Any questions or queries, contact Dermatology on 01695 656 107 between the hours of 9am – 5pm Monday-Friday or the Dermatology secretaries on 01695 656108.

## Any condition specific danger signals to look out for

- Facial/neck swelling
- Breathlessness
- If you experience any problems, visit your local emergency department

## Contact information if you are worried about your condition

- Your own GP

## Other useful telephone numbers / contacts:

- NHS 111
- Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton)  
0300 100 1000
- Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire)  
0800 328 6297
- Dermatology  
01695 656 107 / 656 109

## Notes

For appointments: Telephone: 01695 656 680

Dermatology Department, Ormskirk Hospital: 01695 656 107

Southport Hospital  
Town Lane,  
Kew,  
Southport,  
Merseyside,  
PR8 6PN  
Telephone:  
01704 547 471

Ormskirk Hospital  
Dicconson Way,  
Wigan Road,  
Ormskirk,  
Lancashire,  
L39 2AZ  
Telephone:  
01695 577 111