



Urticaria

Sumit G. Paydelwar

FDHMC, CIDCO N-5, Sambhajinagar, Aurangabad

INTRODUCTION

Skin is an organ on which we all take a greater or lesser pride, the one that receives the greatest amount of attention, the one for which more pains are taken to beautify and is adored than all others and this is the one in which any change is readily noticed and hence a relief is most promptly sought.

Urticaria (hives) is a type of rash characterized by circular weals of reddened and itching skin. The wheals can be a few millimeters or several centimeters diameter, colored white or red, often surrounded by a red flare, and usually itchy.

Each wheal may last a few minutes or several hours, and may change shape. Wheals may be round, or form rings, a map-like pattern, or giant patches.

The wheals generally rise in clusters, with one cluster getting worse as another gets better. The condition can afflict any part of the body, but is common to the trunk, throat, arms and legs. Involvement of the face may cause swelling of the eyelids and lips.

Hives can be triggered by a number of different factors, most commonly infections, but also medications, insect stings and food allergy. Other conditions (such as systemic lupus erythematosus, or problems with the thyroid gland) can also bring on an attack of hives in susceptible people. It is thought that around one in every six people will experience at least one attack of hives at some point in their lives.

Urticaria is a hypersensitivity reaction caused by either external or an internal cause. The signs and symptoms sometimes annoy the patient to a greater extent and leads to both mental and physical disturbance.

Another aspect to be taken into consideration is that these symptoms will have an effect on the psychic aspect of the patient. Since the manifestations are external, people are in a hurry to conceal the disease and hence go in for topical applications which take the disease further deep into the body.

Skin diseases have been earnestly treated by Homoeopathic medications for a long time with good results. Applying the vital principles of Homoeopathy and wholistic approach in skin diseases should not be considered as local diseases. The use of external application should be strictly avoided. These disease should be regarded as the ones resulting from internal derangement of vital force and disharmony and it should be treated with internal medicine.

To cure an urticaria case the basic pathology should be understood, so that the scope of Homoeopathy is known in these cases. This also entails the patient in maintaining the dosage and repetition schedule. A clear understanding of the cause of the disease helps the physician to be aware of the obstacles to cure the patient.

HOMOEOPATHY & URTICARIA

Since the urticaria is treated on the basis of the genetic tendency and the constitutional type of the patient, the cure is supposed to be at a deeper level, which is expected to strengthen the immune system making the patient stronger and healthier. Entire homeopathy treatment, is based on the natural law of cure, is essentially safe and absolutely harmless.

The homeopathic remedy which is selected in every case after detail study, brings about harmony at the constitutional level & at immunological level bringing normalcy to the patient.

It will be of interest to note that the homeopathy medicines are essentially oral and not in the form of creams, lotions or any local application on the skin.

Skin disorders are often the end result of inner, emotional stresses. Very aptly, homoeopathy does not believe in treating skin diseases with local ointment or creams. We believe in treating skin diseases by oral medicines only, which go deep into the system and cure from within.

In this era of information technology, do not remain untreated from an ailment only because you do not know that it is actually curable with homoeopathy. Homoeopathy offers amazing treatment for most chronic and recurring ailments.

Homoeopathy has a unique approach of the method of preparation of the drugs in which the end result will contain only the 'dynamic curative power' of the drug substance, devoid of any original crude substance. By a special mode of preparation called 'potentization', over 2500 homeopathic medicines are prepared from sources, Hence homeopathic remedies with its ultra minute dose are non-toxic, absolutely harmless and bring about SAFE AND SURE CURE. Homoeopathic remedies are dynamic agents influencing body's energy.

The concept of disease in homoeopathy is that disease is a total affection of mind and body, the disturbance of the whole organism. Individual organs are not the cause of illness but disturbance at the inner level (disturbance of the life force, the vital energy of the body) is the cause of illness. Therefore homoeopathy does not believe in giving different medicines for different afflicted parts of body but rather give one single constitutional remedy, which will cover the disturbance of the whole person. Medical philosophy is coming more and more to the conclusion that the mere treatment of symptoms and organs can only help temporarily and that it is the healing power of the body as whole that has to be enhanced. Homoeopathy believes in holistic, totalistic and individualistic approach.

Urticaria

Urticaria (also commonly known as Hives) is a type of rash characterized by circular wheals of reddened and itching skin. They are transient lesions that are composed of a central wheal surrounded by an erythematous halo. Individual lesions are round, oval or figurate and they are often pruritic.

The wheals can vary in size, from relatively small to large patches.

The condition can afflict any part of the body, but is common to the trunk, throat, arms and legs.

Other conditions (such as systemic lupus erythematosus, or problems with the thyroid gland) can also bring on an attack of hives in susceptible people.

It is thought that around one in every six people will experience at least one attack of hives at some point in their lives.



Fig:1 Commonly seen urticaria.

AETIOLOGY

The release of histamine, and possibly other vasoactive mediators from mast cells leads to a sudden increase in vascular capillary permeability allowing the escape of fluid from the circulation into the tissues.

Mast cells may degranulate in response to a number of stimuli including physical, chemical, pharmacological and immunological.

Different mechanisms may be operating in different types of urticaria. The type I hypersensitivity is mediated through the IgE attached to the mast cell which will degranulate on exposure to the specific antigen.

Patients suffering from this type of allergic urticaria frequently have a personal or family history of atopy.

Mast cells can also degranulate by other non-immunological stimuli. Drugs like salicylates and NSAIDs on the other hand act on the mast cell through its action on the cyclo- oxygenase pathway.

It has been postulated that food additives such as tartrazine, azo dyes, benzoates and sulphites can provoke urticaria through a similar mechanism. Recently some research workers have demonstrated the presence of IgG auto-antibodies directed against IgE receptor Fc epsilon RI of mast cells and basophils in some patients with chronic idiopathic urticaria, which can activate the mast cells to degranulate. Vasodilatation, dermal oedema and a mild perivascular infiltration of lymphocytes and eosinophils are seen in a typical lesion of urticaria.

However in a small number of patients repeated biopsies may show a predominance of neutrophils and eosinophils infiltrate and absence of endothelial damage, representing a late phase reaction, which suggest that other cellular elements and mediators may operate in the pathogenesis of urticaria in some cases.

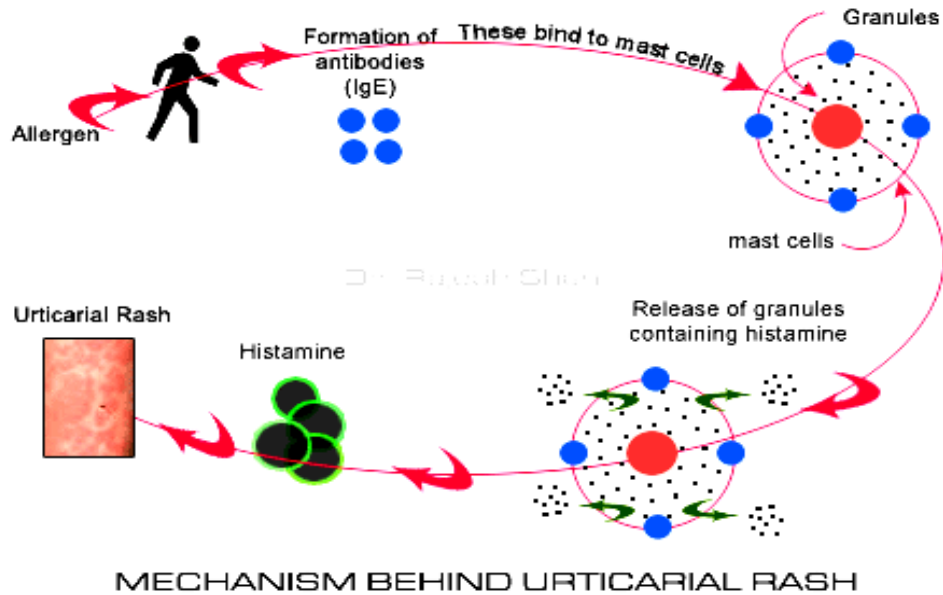


Fig: 2 Mechanism of urticarial rash

Mortality/Morbidity:

Acute urticaria causes discomfort, but it does not cause mortality unless it is associated with angioedema involving the upper airways.

Race:

No variation in race is reported.

Sex:

Females have a slightly higher prevalence (61%) than males.

Age:

Acute urticaria affects persons of all age groups. The mean age of persons who are affected is in the second to third decade of life.

MANAGEMENT:

GENERAL MEASURES:

Emergency-room care for life-threatening reactions

Diagnostic tests may include laboratory blood studies, urinalysis, erythrocyte sedimentation rate and chest x-ray to rule out inflammatory infection. Treatment aims are to prevent contact with the triggering factors.

Allergy skin tests and desensitization injections

Don't take drugs (including aspirin, laxatives, sedatives, vitamins, antacids, pain killers, or cough syrups) not prescribed for you

Don't wear tight underwear or foundation garments. Any skin irritation may trigger new outbreaks

Don't take hot baths or showers

Apply cold-water compresses or soaks to relieve itching

ROLE OF NUTRITION

“Food is medicine” back in 400 B. C. Hippocrates said, “Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food”. Today good nutrition is very important.

In fast moving world of today, lifestyles are changing and large number of convenient products are being added everyday. The main factor, which affect our health system are unhealthy lifestyles, nutrient deficient foods, eating patterns that are thoughtless and chemically altered foods. Thereby leading to many diseases and problems like mal-absorption syndrome, this leads to acidity, headache, ulcers and obesity.

Therefore good nutrition should be part of an over all healthy lifestyles, which also includes regular exercise, not smoking or drinking alcohol, stress management and limiting exposure to environmental hazards. The keys to good nutrition are balance, variety, and moderation. To stay healthy, your body needs right balance of carbohydrates, fats and protein, the three main component of nutrition.

It is a well known fact that diet therapy had primary role in the treatment of many disorders. Suitable dietary modifications are extremely important not only in management but also in prevention.

Dietary changes that may be helpful

Allergy to foods and food additives is a common cause of hives, especially in chronic cases. The foods most often reported to trigger hives are dairy products, eggs, chicken, cured meat, alcoholic beverages, chocolate, citrus fruits, shellfish, and nuts.

Food additives that have been shown to trigger hives include colorants (azo dyes), flavorings (salicylates), artificial sweeteners (aspartame), preservatives (benzoates, nitrites, sorbic acid), antioxidants (hydroxytoluene, sulfite, gallate), and emulsifiers/stabilizers (polysorbates, vegetable gums).

Numerous clinical studies demonstrate that diets that are free of foods or food additives that commonly trigger allergic reactions typically produce significant reductions in symptoms in 50–75% of people with chronic hives. People with hives not clearly linked to a known cause should discuss the possibility of food allergies with a doctor.

Nutritional supplements that may be helpful

In theory, high amounts of vitamin C might help people with hives by lowering histamine levels. Amounts of at least 2,000 mg daily appear necessary to produce these effects. No research trials have yet explored the clinical effects of vitamin C supplementation in people with hives.

Vitamin B12 has been reported to reduce the severity of acute hives as well as to reduce the frequency and severity of outbreaks in chronic cases. The amount used in these reported case studies was 1,000 mcg by injection per week. Whether taking B12 supplements orally would have these effects remains unknown. On rare occasions, vitamin B12 injections cause hives in susceptible people.

Whether such reactions are actually triggered by exposure to large amounts of vitamin B12 or to preservatives and other substances found in most vitamin B12 injections remains unclear.

According to preliminary studies from many years ago, lack of hydrochloric acid (HCl) secretion by the stomach was associated with chronic hives, presumably as a result of increasing the likelihood of developing food allergies. In one such study, 31% were diagnosed as having achlorhydria (no gastric acid output), and 53% were shown to be hypochlorhydric (having low gastric acid output). In a related study, treatment with an HCl supplement and a vitamin B-complex supplement helped to treat people with hives. Betaine HCl is the most common hydrochloric acid-containing supplement; it comes in tablets or capsules measured in grains or milligrams. One or more tablets or capsules, each containing 5–10 grains (325–650 mg) are typically taken with a meal that contains protein. Diagnosis of a deficiency of HCl. A doctor should supervise its supplementation.