



Allergic reactions

Allergic reactions (also known as hives or urticaria) are extremely common in childhood. Most allergic reactions are not serious and can be treated with over the counter medications. A life threatening allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) is extremely rare, and symptoms of this usually develop in the first 30-60 minutes after an exposure.

Cause: There are many causes for allergic reactions. The most common causes are foods, medications, viral infections, and insect bites. In 40% of childhood cases, there is no clear cause of the reaction.

Symptoms: Allergic reactions cause an itchy rash that can involve the whole body. The rash may be fine bumps or larger red bubbles. It is very similar to other common rashes and often requires a physician to diagnose correctly. Typically, the rash will come and go throughout the day, and may move to different body parts throughout the day. Difficulty with breathing or swallowing are signs of a more serious reaction, and your physician or 911 should be contacted immediately. This rash is not contagious.

Treatment: Treatment involves removing the cause of the reaction (if known) and benadryl by mouth. Benadryl is an antihistamine that helps stop the reaction and the itching. For localized itching, topical anti-itch lotions may be used. For more serious cases, your physician may prescribe a short course of steroids. Reactions that involve difficulty swallowing or breathing require immediate evaluation by a physician.

Follow up: Typically, the rash will resolve in 2-3 days and no follow up is needed. You should follow up immediately if your child develops any of the following:

- Difficulty swallowing, talking or breathing
- Increased drooling
- Rapid, labored, noisy breathing
- Worsening symptoms

Please note: These guidelines are not meant to diagnose any condition, or treat any condition not diagnosed by a physician. They are provided for general information only. If you are concerned about your child's condition, call a physician or 911 immediately.