

ACUTE AND CHRONIC URTICARIA

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CASE 1

Bea Hives is a 30 y/o woman who presents to you with urticaria and lip swelling on and off for two months. When she first developed this, she went to her PMD, Dr. Ubangi, who examined her and said everything looked fine to him.

1. What constitutes acute versus chronic urticaria?
2. In what percent of patients does angioedema accompany chronic urticaria?
3. What questions related to the characteristics of the lesions do you want to ask to help differentiate chronic urticaria from a vasculitis?
4. What two disorders, more common in women, can cause chronic urticaria?
5. What over-the-counter medications can cause or worsen urticaria?
6. If she had presented with isolated lip swelling (i.e., no hives), what two etiologies would you think of?
7. What laboratory test could you order to help confirm one of the causes above?
8. If she had renal insufficiency, was on an ace inhibitor, and developed lip swelling, is there some analogous medication you could switch her to that is not associated with angioedema?
9. What other medications might be offered if symptomatic relief wasn't obtained with antihistamines, and how would you prescribe them?

CASE 2

Howie Suffer is a 40 y/o hypochondriac patient of yours who never sees you unless he thinks he has something real. Today you're seeing him with hives that began 30 minutes ago. Your astute clinical acumen suggests that it may be related to something he ate, having noticed that a napkin with food on it is still hanging from his shirt collar.

1. What are some common offending foods that can cause acute urticaria? How would you ascertain which might be the culprit?
2. What are important questions to ask?
3. What are such additives and where might they be found?
4. What common infections can cause acute urticaria?
5. Are you going to order any laboratory studies to elucidate the etiology of Howie's hives?
6. How will you manage the hives right now?
7. What if Howie is covered in hives-- itching, miserable and unable to sleep? Will you give him steroids?
8. Howie then divulges that he thinks he's had similar reactions every time he eats shrimp cocktail. Anything else you want to prescribe for him?