

Q & A



DR. FIONA WRIGHT

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If you have questions, we have the *wright* answers.
What do you want to know?

What is the best way to treat exercise-induced hives? Also, is this a condition that will eventually just go away?

Kelley N., Lewisville, TX

Exercise-induced hives (urticaria) is a condition that can occur during or after exercise. Hives or "welts" are usually raised, flat bumps on the skin that are redder around the edges than in the middle. Hives can occur on any part of the body and may look like red spots, blotches, or blisters. Hives that appear after exercise can occur with or without other allergy symptoms, such as wheezing with breathing (asthma). If exercise causes smaller hives (usually less than a half-centimeter), you are likely to have a condition called "cholinergic urticaria."

Cholinergic urticaria is also known as "heat-induced urticaria." This kind of hives from exercise is a reaction that can occur from a warm body temperature or from sweating. If you have this kind of hives, you may also notice hives after taking hot showers, getting emotional, or eating hot foods. If this is your hive problem, taking an antihistamine such as hydroxyzine, Claritin, or Allegra prior to exercise is helpful, and it can also be helpful to avoid exercising in hot weather.

Exercise-related hives can often be a long-term problem. There have been reports of people who have had recurring symptoms after exercise for as long as 30 years.

In some people, eating certain foods before exercise may make allergic symptoms more likely. Some experts believe that exercise changes your digestion and food absorption and that exercising after eating leads you to have

a greater exposure to allergy-causing food proteins. The most common food allergy that triggers exercise-induced hives is wheat allergy. Allergy to nuts, shellfish, eggs, and other foods can also cause this problem. A person with exercise-induced hives should consider getting tested for food allergies. Once your triggers are known, you should avoid exercising for 4 to 6 hours after you eat.

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