Hives
(Urticaria)

Hives (*urticaria*) are itchy, red, swollen patches on the skin. They may change size, shape, and location quickly and repeatedly. Hives that occur deeper in the skin can cause swelling of the hands, feet, and face. Hives may be an allergic reaction to something you or your child ate, touched, or put on the skin. Hives can also be a reaction to cold, heat, viral infections, medication, insect bites, or emotional stress. Often the cause is unable hard to find. Hives can come and go for several days to several weeks. Hives are not contagious.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS:

- If the cause of the hives is known, avoid exposure to that source.
- To relieve itching and rash:
  - Apply cold compresses to the skin or take cool water baths. Do not take or give your child hot baths or showers because the warmth will make the itching worse.
  - The best medicine for hives is an antihistamine. An antihistamine will not cure hives, but it will reduce their severity. You can use an antihistamine available over the counter, such as Benadryl®. This medicine may make your child sleepy. Teenagers should not drive while using this medicine.
  - Take or give Benadryl® every 6 hours until the hives are completely gone for 24 hours or as directed.
- Your child may have other medications prescribed for itching. Give these as directed by your child's physician.
- You or your child should wear loose fitting clothing, including undergarments. Skin irritations may make hives worse.
- Follow-up as provided by your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You or your child still have considerable itching after taking the medication (prescribed or purchased over the counter).
- An oral temperature above 102º F (38.9º C) develops.
- Joint swelling or pain occurs.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Swollen lips or tongue are noticed.
- There is difficulty with breathing, swallowing, or tightness in the throat or chest.
- *Abdominal* (belly) pain develops.
- Your child starts acting very sick.

These may be the first signs of a life-threatening allergic reaction. THIS IS AN EMERGENCY. Call 911 for medical help.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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