

## CHRONIC SPONTANEOUS URTICARIA (CSU) (CHRONIC SPONTANEOUS HIVES)

### Definition:

- **Chronic:** Hives for  $\geq 6$  weeks
- **Spontaneous:** not from an allergy
- **Urticaria:** Hives (raised, red itchy bumps/welts)
- Often associated with **Angioedema:** Swelling (like deeper hive, beneath skin)
- CSU is a benign (not dangerous, just annoying) medical condition

### Cause:

- CSU is THE most common cause of chronic hives in adults (>95% of cases)
- **CSU is NOT caused by allergies**
  - ~50% patients with CSU make an abnormal antibody to themselves
  - Antibodies are proteins that are normally made to fight infection
  - Instead of fighting infection, this antibody causes hives
- **Triggers:** stress (emotional or physical), colds, fevers, infection, heat, exercise, pressure, NSAIDs (group of anti-inflammatory medication such as Aspirin, Motrin, Ibuprofen, Aleve, Naproxen), opiates (such as codeine, morphine), alcohol
- The above are POSSIBLE triggers therefore if they are not causing you problems, don't worry about it
- Triggers can make the hives worse but are NOT the cause of the hives

### How long does it last?

- Variable: lasts months to years, average 3-5 years
- When the hives disappear, they can come back months to years later

### Treatment:

- Antihistamines REGULARLY (take every day to prevent hives)
- Antihistamines are safe to take long term
- Dose generally 1-4 pills (exception Rx cetirizine 20mg pill is  $\frac{1}{2}$  pill (10mg) to max 2 pills (40 mg)) daily **EVERY day** to prevent the hives from occurring.
- Can go up 1 pill (if Rx cetirizine 20 mg then  $\frac{1}{2}$  pill (10mg)) every 2 weeks **if needed** to maximum 4 pills (if Rx cetirizine 20 mg max 2 pills (40mg))
- NB over the counter Reactine (cetirizine) is 10mg but Rx cetirizine is 20 mg
- Avoid the antihistamines mixed with oral decongestant i.e. "Sinus" meds containing pseudoephedrine
- **Avoid 1<sup>st</sup> generation sedating antihistamines like Benadryl** (diphenhydramine) and Chlor-Tripolon (chlorphenamine)
- **Use 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation antihistamines:**
  - Reactine (cetirizine) 10-40mg once/day
  - Rupall (rupatadine) 10-40 mg once/day (by prescription)
  - Blexten (bilastine) 20-80 mg once/day (by prescription)
  - Aerius (desloratidine) 5-20mg once/day
  - Allegra (fexofenadine) 120-360mg once/day (60 mg Allegra likely not effective so start at 120 mg)
  - Claritin (loratidine) 10-40mg once/day
  - All the above 24hr (once/day), non-sedating antihistamines
- If necessary, there are other medications that also work