

# Got hives? How to relieve them at home

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(HealthDay)—When you break out in hives, you want relief fast.

This common [skin](#) reaction is characterized by itchy bumps or raised,

swollen patches. Fortunately, hives are usually harmless and short-lived, a Chicago dermatologist says.

"A single [hive](#) tends to last for a few minutes to a few hours. Most hives clear within 24 hours," Dr. Danilo Del Campo said in an [American Academy of Dermatology](#) news release.

Several factors, including sunlight, stress and an allergic reaction to food or medicine, can cause hives, also known as urticaria.

While anyone can get [hives](#), Black women, people who have eczema, and smokers are at increased risk.

If you have [darker skin](#), hives are often the same color or slightly darker or lighter. If you have lighter skin, hives will appear red or pink.

Del Campo offered these tips to get relief from [hives](#):

- Ease itchiness with a cool, damp washcloth, anti-itch cream or lotion, or colloidal oatmeal baths.
- Try not to scratch, which irritates your skin more. Keeping fingernails short can reduce scratching.
- Bathe in warm water. Don't rub the itchy skin with a washcloth, loofah or mesh sponge. It's best to apply soap or cleanser by gently putting it on your skin with your hands.
- Use fragrance-free cleanser rather than an unscented one. An unscented product contains fragrance that's been covered up so that you cannot smell it. Because an unscented product contains fragrance, it can still irritate your skin.
- Wearing loose-fitting, 100% cotton clothing can reduce the irritation on your skin.
- If you often get hives or they last a long time, keep track in a journal. This can help you identify what's triggering your hives,

so you can take steps to prevent them.

"If your hives don't clear after following these tips, talk to a board-certified dermatologist," Del Campo said.

Get immediate medical care or go to the nearest emergency room if you have hives along with any of the following: problems swallowing, feeling light-headed or faint, have swelling in your mouth or throat, a racing heart or shortness of breath or trouble breathing.

**More information:** For more on hives, go to the [Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America](#).

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