

Best Practice Guideline

Chronic Urticaria

Diagnosis and Screening

Definition:

Hives for >6 weeks

Treatment and Management

A thorough history and physical examination is usually all that is required for chronic urticaria patients. Targeted laboratory testing can be conducted based on clinical suspicion for underlying causes.

- **Laboratory screening:**

CBC, CMP, ANA, TSH, thyroid peroxidase antibody, antithyroglobulin antibody, free T4, C3, CH50

Step 1 — Initial therapy is to administer a second-generation antihistamine (Zyrtec, Claritin) at standard therapeutic dose

Step 2 — if symptoms are not controlled within one to two weeks with Step 1 measures then therapy may be increased by making one or more of the changes described below.

- Advance the dose of the second-generation antihistamine.
- Add a different second-generation antihistamine.
- Add an H2 antihistamine (Zantac, Pepcid)
- Add a leukotriene-receptor antagonist (Singulair)
- Add a first-generation H1 antihistamine at bedtime. (Hydroxyzine, Doxepin)

Step 3 — The dose of the first-generation H1 antihistamine may be advanced gradually if the measures in Step 2 do not provide adequate symptom control.

Step 4 — Patients who are still symptomatic after trying Step 3 measures are considered to have refractory chronic urticaria. There are several therapies that may be considered for such patients, including Xolair ([omalizumab](#)) and various immunomodulatory and immunosuppressive agents (Methotrexate, Prednisone, Dapsone).

Surveillance and Follow Up

Most patients with chronic urticaria require multiple medications to fully control symptoms. Withdrawal of medication should be considered once the patient is symptom free for 3-6 months. Patients with CU are initially seen in 4 weeks. Once the patient is asymptomatic they are seen every 3 months until they are weaned to one medication. Monotherapy is continued for 6 months and stopped if still asymptomatic.

References

[http://www.uptodate.com/contents/chronic-urticaria-treatment-of-refractory-symptoms?source=see link](http://www.uptodate.com/contents/chronic-urticaria-treatment-of-refractory-symptoms?source=see_link)

<http://www.uptodate.com/contents/chronic-urticaria-standard-management-and-patient-education?source=machineLearning&search=chronic+urticaria&selectedTitle=3%7E50§ionRank=3&anchor=H21#H21>

<http://www.aaaai.org/practice-resources/statements-and-practice-parameters/practice-parameters-and-other-guidelines-page.aspx>. The diagnosis and management of acute and chronicurticaria: 2014 update