

“I’m allergic to the cold!”

Q I have a rare condition called cold urticaria, which is an allergy to the cold. When exposed to cold air I break out in red, itchy lumps and my breathing becomes difficult at times. I take a daily dose of 180mg of Fexofenadine Hydrochloride which helps a bit but not completely. Are there any forms of alternative therapy that could help?



Dr Caroline Longmore co-founded Galen Naturopathic Centre in Surrey (galennaturopathic.com).

A Dr Caroline Longmore advises: “Cold urticaria is an allergy whereby visual ‘hives’ or red patches form on the skin after exposure to the cold. This occurs most commonly between the ages of 18 and 25 when the body is exposed to cold and may appear within two to five minutes and last for one to two hours. Associated symptoms may also be wheezing, dizziness and in the most severe case, blackouts or fainting.

The most commonly believed explanation for this condition is that when the body is exposed to the cold this causes a dilation of blood capillaries, which in turn induces a fluid to flow into the surrounding tissue (the outer layer of the skin), producing the hives. This fluid is produced in response to a histamine reaction to cold, or a sudden drop in temperature, cold air or cold water or simply a cold surface.

Other factors may be viral infections, parasites, insect bites or a reaction to penicillin or aspirin. I would advise that you consult a health professional, and try the following:

- Have a test for food allergy: check for known allergens such as milk, fish or eggs.
- Take time to relax, as stress may be a factor.
- Speak to your GP and get your thyroid function checked out.
- Take 1,000mg of vitamin C daily as this inhibits histamine secretion.
- Take 200 to 400mg Quercetin daily as it inhibits the manufacture and release of histamine.
- Include 100mcg of vitamin B12 by tablet or injection in your daily supplement intake.
- Boost your exposure to sunlight wherever this is possible.
- Herbal remedies in tincture including liquorice, camomile, artemisia, aloe vera and ginger can be useful. Visit a herbalist or naturopath for the best advice.”