

MANAGING YOUR ANGIOEDEMA

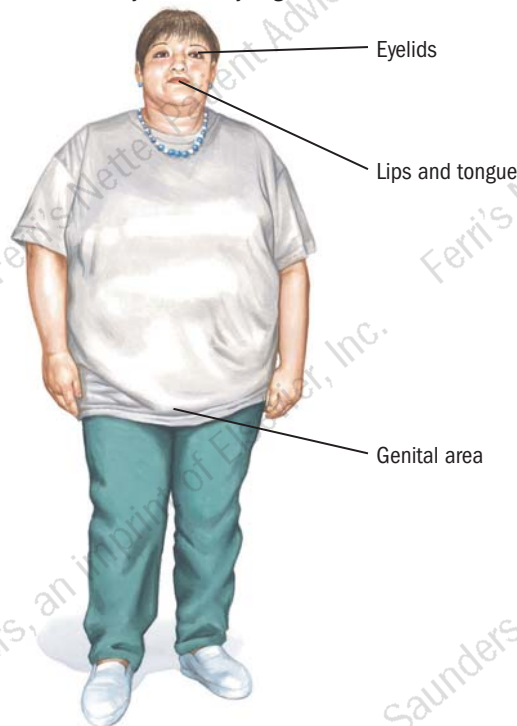


Angioedema is similar to hives, except that the raised bumps are deeper in the skin so you don't see them.



New foods, perfumes, drugs, soaps, and clothes are the usual causes of angioedema.

Areas commonly affected by angioedema:



What Is Angioedema?

Angioedema is an allergic reaction that is like the common skin condition of hives (urticaria). Hives are raised, red, itchy, irregular bumps on the skin. In angioedema, the same thing happens but it is deeper in the skin. The bumps cannot be seen but can be felt. Anyone can get angioedema. About 15% to 20% of all people will have at least one episode of hives or angioedema in their lifetime.

What Causes Angioedema?

Usual causes are allergic reactions to new drugs, eating new foods, and wearing new perfumes. But even foods or drugs used in the past without problems can cause an allergic reaction later. Angioedema cannot be caught and is not an infection, although infections can cause it. Certain types are hereditary (may occur in family members).

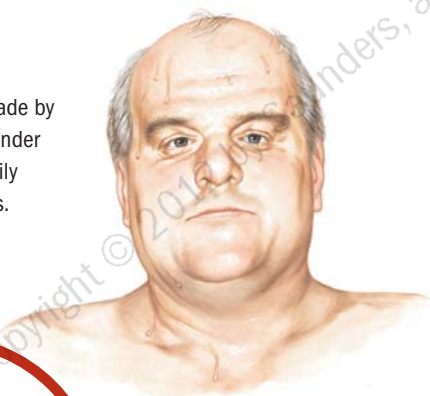
What Are the Symptoms of Angioedema?

The main symptom is swollen skin that can be tender and painful. Swelling at one spot is usually present for only a day or two, but swelling will move from one spot to another and last for several days or may become chronic. Chronic angioedema, although uncomfortable and irritating, usually won't become more serious.

Angioedema can occur anywhere on the body but more often involves eyelids, lips, tongue, and genitals. Outside the body it is usually not dangerous. It can also occur inside the body, in intestines and lungs (airways), where it can potentially cause breathing difficulty, which can be serious and even fatal.



Diagnosis is usually made by finding swollen areas under the skin, reviewing family history, and blood tests.



Lotions and creams do not provide relief, because the angioedema is too deep for them to reach.

The best treatment is stopping exposure to the cause. Cold compresses may help you feel more comfortable. Your doctor may prescribe oral antihistamines or stronger medicine, such as steroids.



How Is Angioedema Diagnosed?

The doctor examines the swollen skin and the tendency of swelling to come and go for diagnosis. Blood tests can be done but don't always help or affect treatment. A family history is very important, so the doctor will ask family members about any episodes of angioedema.

How Is Angioedema Treated?

No cure exists, but symptoms can be controlled.

The best treatment is to remove the cause. However, the exact cause is often unknown or impossible to remove. Therefore the main approach to management is control of symptoms.

Application of cold compresses may provide comfort. Lotions and creams don't usually help because they don't get deep enough when they're applied to the skin.

Oral antihistamines work well, but the right dose must be taken regularly, or the angioedema may return. Antihistamines also may have side effects (drowsiness, dry mouth), but newer antihistamines have fewer of these effects. Stronger drugs (prednisone or other steroids) may help if antihistamines don't control the angioedema.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Angioedema:

- ✓ **DO** call your doctor immediately if you have trouble breathing, are wheezing, or have chest or abdominal pain. Angioedema may require long-term treatment.
- ✓ **DO** use cold compresses on swollen areas.
- ✓ **DO** take antihistamines in proper doses.
- ✓ **DO** note any possible causes (new foods, drugs, soaps, perfumes, clothes). Avoid those items that trigger the reaction. Ask your doctor about your drugs.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if your angioedema doesn't respond to 2 or 3 days of continuous antihistamines.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have repeated attacks of angioedema.
- ⊘ **DON'T** treat swelling with heat, creams, ointments, or lotions.

FROM THE DESK OF

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- American Academy of Dermatology
930 North Meachum Road
Schaumburg, IL 60173
Tel: (866) 503-7546
Website: <http://www.aad.org/>