

# Backgrounder: Chronic Spontaneous Urticaria

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## What is chronic spontaneous urticaria (CSU)?

Chronic spontaneous urticaria (CSU), also known as chronic idiopathic urticaria (CIU) in the US, is a **severe and distressing skin condition** characterized by **red, swollen, itchy and sometimes painful hives on the skin**<sup>1,2</sup>. At any given time, the prevalence of chronic urticaria (CU) is up to **1% of the world's population**, and up to **two thirds of these patients have CSU**<sup>3,4</sup>.

Chronic spontaneous urticaria is an **unpredictable and debilitating form** of chronic itch, hives and can present with swelling in the deeper layers of the skin (angioedema) that **spontaneously present and re-occur for more than six weeks**<sup>1-3,5</sup>. In most cases, CSU **generally lasts 1 to 5 years**, but can last for decades<sup>3</sup>. Women are **twice as likely** as men to be diagnosed with the disease<sup>3</sup>.

## What are the symptoms of CSU?

Chronic spontaneous urticaria symptoms include the appearance of **flare-type skin reactions** and **itchy wheals**, often described as hives<sup>1-3</sup>. **Up to 50% of people with CSU** also experience **angioedema** and tend to experience **longer-lasting symptoms**<sup>7</sup>.

Chronic spontaneous urticaria symptoms are **unpredictable as they appear spontaneously** without a **specific external trigger** for the chronic itch, hives and angioedema that develop<sup>3,6</sup>. Research into **CSU's underlying cause** has indicated the **role of the autoimmune system**, with possible aggravating factors including **stress, fatigue and infection**<sup>1</sup>.

## The burden of CSU

Chronic spontaneous urticaria may significantly impact **a person's quality of life**, resulting in negative effects that include **sleep deprivation** and psychological comorbidities such as **depression** and **anxiety**<sup>3</sup>. Research indicates these effects are similar to people with ischemic heart disease who experience a **lack of energy, social isolation** and **emotional upset**<sup>5,6</sup>. Patients also experience difficulties in relation to work, with over half (56%) losing at least one day of work because of the condition.<sup>6</sup>

Up to **50 of chronic spontaneous urticaria patients** do not respond to **licensed doses of H1-antihistamines**.<sup>7</sup>

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## References

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