

The burden of chronic spontaneous urticaria

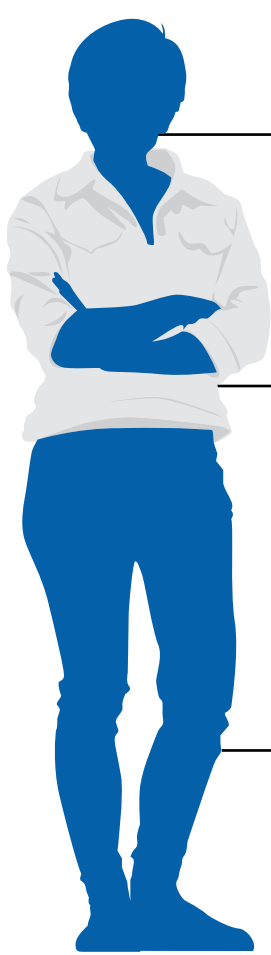
What is chronic spontaneous urticaria (CSU)?

CSU is an unpredictable chronic disease linked to an overactive immune system with no known cause.^{1,2} It is not an allergic reaction but is often mistaken as one, making it difficult to diagnose and manage.^{3,4}

Due to the way CSU symptoms present, factors such as sleep, work and relationships can suffer. Without adequate treatment of symptoms the stress could lead to anxiety or depression.^{5,6}

What are the symptoms of CSU?

CSU is characterised by the spontaneous and recurrent appearance of hives (wheals), angioedema or both for at least six weeks.⁸ Symptoms typically persist for up to five years, but they can last for decades.¹



Angioedema

A painful swelling in the deeper layer of the skin.⁷



Hives

Red, itchy, painful swellings on the outer surface of the skin.⁷



Itch

An intense itching or burning sensation over the skin.⁷

What is it like to have CSU?

CSU can be debilitating and a huge burden on patients' lives.³ People with CSU are twice as likely to experience difficulty sleeping alongside anxiety, distress and depression.⁵



Depression



Anxiety



Sleeping problems

"It takes you into a very dark place because there's no escape from it. It's literally like your body is torturing you."³

"I thought that I was allergic to something. I was wracking my brain."⁸

"I had swelling around my eyes. I couldn't go to work that day."⁸

"CSU means living in a prison of the unknown; you never know what you're going to face everyday."⁸

"You feel very helpless. Like you're going mad."⁸

"My entire life has been hijacked. I want it back."⁸

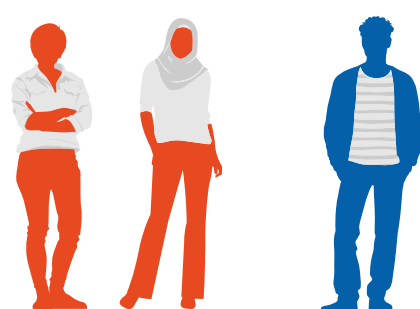


What causes CSU?

CSU is a spontaneous disease, which means it can occur at any time.⁹ The causes are not fully understood, but it has been found that the immune system plays a role in many patients.⁹ The redness, intense itching and swelling happen when mast cells, a type of white blood cell, in the body are over-stimulated. The rapid and unpredictable stimulation of mast cells causes inflammation and fluid retention in the skin resulting in hives and swelling of soft tissue.^{2,10}

How prevalent is CSU?

Of the global population, **0.5-1%** is affected by CSU at any one time, which equates to **300,000-600,000** people in the UK.^{1,11}



Women are almost **twice as likely** to experience CSU than men.¹

CSU affects people of all ages, although it is most likely to occur between the ages **20-40**,¹ hugely impacting work and relationships.

Treatment goal



The ultimate goal when treating CSU is for complete control of the disease.⁷

References

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