

Urticaria – And the Cold

As part of my January promises to myself I waddled off to do a spin class. Seemed a reasonable idea at the time. A bit of exercise to work off the Xmas indulgences. I really enjoyed the class, and was suitably proud of my red face and general level of exhaustion. I felt I'd put in a good effort. Sure my skin felt hot and tight but hey...everyone else looked a mess so I didn't think anything of it.

The problem was, my skin didn't cool down. It stayed hot, then itchy, then blotchy.



A full blown, body wide outbreak of Urticaria followed. Arms, chest, legs, stomach, back and most specially of all – face. I love that about Urticaria. Bright red forehead is a great look for us middle aged women. I downed some antihistamines but it had no effect. My arms were hot, red and itchy. Calamine lotion dealt with the itch temporarily but it's very drying so it's a temporary solution.

Two days later I couldn't stand it anymore and off I went to the GP. As everyone knows, getting a GP appointment isn't easy. Our practice releases a bank of appointments on line at around 6:30 every evening. So, if you sit by your computer, on the booking system, from 6:15ish to 6:45 then you're likely to be able to grab one of the next days' slots. I nabbed one with a doctor I've not seen before for the next morning.

Here's the thing about Urticaria. Its crazy itchy, which is both exhausting and infuriating. You're on edge the whole time because every inch of your body is uncomfortable and hot. Plus it's embarrassing. Really, truly embarrassing. People stare, people comment, people ask questions. Most enraging of all...it's a tricky one. Was it caused by getting too hot? Maybe. Was it caused by the cold

weather? Maybe. Did an allergy trigger it? Maybe. So on top of everything else, there's no sense of what I can do to make it go away. I have to keep track and see what happens. See if I can figure out the cause. God I wish there was a test – I really wouldn't care how unpleasant it was. Just something to give me certainty. And that's the real stress of Urticaria – knowing it may come back, at any time, for no damn good reason that can be understood.

So at the GP's appointment the doctor was sympathetic (always good) but concerned. So concerned that she called in a colleague for a second opinion. They asked (several times) how 'I felt in myself'. Fine was the answer – grumpy, itchy and bloody uncomfortable – but clear headed. Naturally I was put on Prednisone (so good for the weight loss plans). A weeks' course of 30mg. In the past 3 days' worth has knocked the Urticaria for six, so I was surprised by the dose.

Not as surprised as I was by having to go back a week later for more. It hadn't shifted. It was cooler, less widespread, but still very much there. I'm now just finishing my 'reducing' dose of Prednisone. My skin is improving but nowhere normal. I've been given a new antihistamine to take at night (which is the drowsy making sort) and that has helped to get some rest.

Was it the cold weather (GP's best guess), or the exercise (GP says that possible too). I'm just praying that it continues to get better. Naturally the world doesn't stop turning so I still have to work, cook, (try to) sleep and not to snap at child and husband when they don't hear me, or ask, what appears to be, Gods stupidest question. I know it's me being short tempered and irritable. They know I'm uncomfortable (to say the least), so I'm counting to 5 before answering a lot, just to be on the safe side!

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