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Health newsfeed for Monday, February 25, 2013

HEADLINE: TREATING CHRONIC HIVES

ANCHOR LEAD: PEOPLE WHO HAVE CHRONIC HIVES MAY FINALLY HAVE AN EFFECTIVE TREATMENT, ELIZABETH TRACEY REPORTS

IgE is shorthand for immunoglobulin E, a chemical found in our blood that's linked to allergic reactions of many types, including asthma. A drug used to treat asthma in those whose condition is allergic known as omalizumab, marketed as Zolair, has now been shown to alleviate hives in people who get them chronically. Romi Saini, an allergist and one author of the study published recently in the New England Journal of Medicine, explains.

SAINI: For many years patients with chronic hives had limited options in terms of how they could take care of their more severe symptoms. What we have is a therapy that was designed originally for people with allergy, a therapy that binds IgE, crossing over and becoming a highly effective drug in patients who are otherwise not controlled by antihistamines. :24

The drug is injected once a month and seems to control the condition for some time after therapy stops. At Johns Hopkins, I'm Elizabeth Tracey.