

ALLERGIES

Allergies are an abnormal response of the immune system that occurs when your immune system reacts to a foreign substance such as pollen, bee venom or pet dander. Allergies include hayfever (allergic rhinitis), atopic dermatitis (eczema), food, insect sting, drug, pet, plant, mold, dust and cosmetic allergies.

Common allergy triggers

- Airborne allergens, such as pollen, animal dander, dust mites and mold
- Certain foods, particularly peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, fish, shellfish, eggs and milk
- Insect stings, such as bee or wasp stings
- Medications, particularly penicillin or penicillin-based antibiotics
- Latex or other substances you touch, which can cause allergic skin reactions

Common symptoms

- Itchy, watery eyes
- Sneezing
- Itchy, runny nose
- Rashes
- Feeling tired or ill
- Hives (a rash with raised red patches)
- Food allergies can also cause stomach cramps, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Insect stings from a bee or other insect causes local swelling, redness, and pain

Severity can vary widely

- Mild reaction / symptoms: rash, itchy-watery eyes, congestion. Symptoms do not spread to other parts of the body.
- Moderate reaction / symptoms: itchiness, hives, difficulty breathing. May spread to other parts of the body.
- Severe allergic reactions / symptoms: Sudden response to allergen. May begin with itching of the eyes or face and within minutes progress to more serious symptoms, including: swelling that can make breathing and swallowing difficult, abdominal pain, cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, mental confusion or dizziness. **Seek immediate medical attention!**

Allergy treatments include

- Allergen avoidance / reducing exposure (i.e. for household allergies – frequently wash bedding, clean toys, vacuum with a fine filter, etc.)
- Medications to reduce symptoms: antihistamines, decongestants, nasal sprays or eye drops
- Nasal rinses

If you have severe allergies, talk to your doctor about treating them with immunotherapy and/or emergency epinephrine.