

... FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

ALL ABOUT ALLERGIES

## WHAT ARE ALLERGIES?

Allergies are your body's reaction to a substance it views as a harmful "invader." For example, coming into contact with what is normally a harmless substance, such as pollen, might cause the immune system, or the body's defense system to react. Substances that cause these reactions are called allergens. An "allergic reaction" are the symptoms caused by the body's response to an allergen.



## WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF ALLERGIES?

Allergy symptoms can be classified as mild, moderate, or severe.

- **Mild** reactions include local symptoms (affecting a specific area of the body) such as a rash or hives; itchiness, watery/red eyes, hay fever, and runny nose. Mild reactions do not spread to other parts of the body.
- **Moderate** reactions include symptoms that spread to other parts of the body. Symptoms may include itchiness, hives, and/or swelling, and breathing difficulties.
- A **severe** allergic reaction, known as anaphylaxis, is a rare, life-threatening emergency in which the body's response to the allergen is sudden and affects the whole body. Anaphylaxis may begin with severe itching of the eyes or face. Within minutes, more serious symptoms appear, including throat swelling (which could result in difficulty swallowing and breathing), abdominal pain, cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, hives, and swelling.

## Coach's Quick Take

Keep track of your allergy symptoms. In your journal also include information like the particular environment you were in, weather conditions, foods eaten, and other possible allergens that you may have come in contact with when you experienced your symptoms.

Journaling will help you recognize the connections between your symptoms and the allergens.

## ALLERGY STATISTICS

55%

Percentage of the U.S. population that tests positive for one or more allergen.

\$

\$7.9 billion: Annual cost of allergies to the health care system or businesses.

ER

30,000: Number of visits to the ER caused by food allergies.

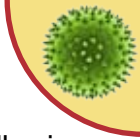
## Quick Tips for Treating Common Allergies

- Stay indoors on a windy day
- Keep car windows closed when traveling
- Avoid pet feathers, fur, saliva, and dander
- Avoid outdoors during peak pollen times 10am-4pm

# DO I HAVE ALLERGIES?

If you have any of the symptoms below talk to your doctor about allergy testing.

## Pollen



Hay fever is an allergic response to pollen. It causes inflammation and swelling of the lining of the nose and of the protective tissue of the eyes.

*Symptoms include:*

- Sneezing
- Congestion
- Itchy, watery, eyes & throat

## Dust Mites

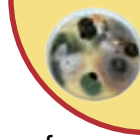


Dust mites are microscopic organisms that live in dust and in the fibers of household objects, such as pillows, mattresses, carpet, and upholstery. Dust mites especially love warm, humid areas.

*Symptoms include:*

- Sneezing
- Congestion
- Itchy, watery, eyes & throat
- Wheezing

## Mold



Mold is a common trigger for allergies and can be found indoors in damp areas, such as the basement or bathroom. It can also be found in an outdoor environment in grass, leaf piles, hay, mulch, or under mushrooms. Mold spores peak during hot, humid weather.

*Symptoms include:*

- Stuffy, runny nose
- Wheezing
- Itchy, watery, eyes, nose & throat

## Animal Dander

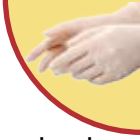


The proteins secreted by the sweat glands in an animal's skin &/or the proteins present in an animal's saliva, can cause allergic reactions in some people.

*Symptoms include:*

- Wheezing
- Stuffy, runny nose
- Itchy, eyes, nose & throat

## Latex



A latex allergy may develop in some individuals after repeated contact with latex. Rubber gloves, such as those used in surgical procedures or home cleaning, are a major source for causing this type of reaction.

*Symptoms include:*

- Rash
- Hives
- Itching
- Blisters
- Redness
- Skin peeling

## Insect Venom



An allergic reaction can often occur when the venom or feces of an insect makes contact with the skin.

*Symptoms include:*

- Difficulty breathing
- Hives or itchy, red rash
- Swelling of the face, throat, or mouth
- Wheezing or difficulty swallowing

## Foods



An allergic reaction can occur within minutes of eating a food, and symptoms can be severe. Shellfish, peanuts, and tree nuts are the most common food allergies in adults. Milk, egg, soy, wheat, shellfish, peanuts, and tree nuts are the most common food allergies in children.

*Symptoms include:*

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Stomach cramping
- Diarrhea
- Itchy throat

## Treatment

In general there is no cure for allergies, but there are several types of medications available -- both over-the-counter and prescription -- to help ease and treat annoying symptoms like congestion and runny nose. These allergy drugs include antihistamines, decongestants, combination drugs, corticosteroids, and others. Allergy shots, which gradually increase your ability to tolerate allergens, are also available.