



ALLERGY

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development • Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control

"Allergic diseases can be controlled; symptoms can be prevented or minimized."

*American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology,
"The Allergy Report"*

Did you know...?

- As many as 40 or 50 million people in the United States suffer from allergies?
- Allergies cause swollen eyes, itching skin, dripping noses, light-headedness and even death?

What is it?

An allergy is a strong reaction by your body's immune system to something that would normally be harmless—a food, plant, or medicine. Common reactions include a stuffy nose, itchy eyes, or a skin rash. Severe allergic reactions (see below) require immediate medical attention.

Many people who have allergies also have asthma. Allergic reactions may trigger asthma attacks, where a swelling and tightening of your airways that makes it difficult to breathe (see "Asthma" fact sheet).

Signs of Allergies and Allergic Reactions include:

- Asthma, shortness of breath, cough, chest tightness or wheezing (See "Asthma" fact sheet)
- Itchy, watery eyes
- Itchy, inflamed or runny nose
- Hives or itchy rash on skin
- Dark circles under and around eyes
- Recurring headache
- Diarrhea or stomach cramps
- Anaphylaxis (a severe reaction) may be life-threatening. Symptoms include: swelling, tingling in the mouth, and a red, itchy rash, as well as light-headedness, shortness of breath, severe sneezing, stomach cramps, and loss of blood pressure. If these symptoms are present, go immediately to a doctor or emergency room for treatment.

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Types of allergies

There are many types of allergies. The following are some of the most common:

Indoor	Outdoor	Foods	Medications	Insect Stings and Bites	Contact with Skin
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ dust■ dust mites■ mold■ pets (most often animal skin flakes or "dander")	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ pollen (from flowering trees and grass)■ mold	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ milk■ citrus fruits■ eggs■ peanuts■ wheat■ fish & shellfish	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ antibiotics (like Penicillin)■ anti-seizure drugs■ anesthetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ bees■ wasps■ hornets■ yellow jackets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ plants (like poison ivy)■ cosmetics■ skin-care products■ jewelry■ latex (gloves or condoms)

What you can do

Know your allergies, and know what to avoid. Not everyone is allergic to the same things!

- Contact your doctor about any unusual reactions to food, plants, medicines, or other items.
- Avoid contact with things you know trigger allergies.
 - Avoid being outside or having the windows open when pollen counts are high.
 - Read food labels carefully to avoid ingredients that cause reactions.
 - Choose medicines and home-care products carefully.
 - Remove carpet or vacuum often to avoid animal dander.
- Keep a clean home (for more tips, see "Asthma" fact sheet).
 - Control pests such as mice and cockroaches.
 - Vacuum floors and upholstery often and consider removing carpet.
 - Avoid having mold, cigarette smoke, pesticides, and chemicals inside the house.
 - Keep pets out of the bedrooms of family members who are allergic to them.
- In the event of a severe allergic reaction, seek emergency medical attention immediately.

For more information . . .

Visit HUD's website at www.hud.gov/offices/lead for more information about addressing health hazards in homes or to learn if HUD has a Healthy Homes program in your community. From this website, you can download a copy of "Help Yourself to A Healthy Home" for more practical steps you can take to make your home a healthy home.

Other Federal Resources

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/od/oc/childhealth

US Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/children

Other Resources

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (AAAAI)
www.aaaai.org

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
www.aafa.org

The Allergy & Asthma Network: Mothers of Asthmatics (AANMA)
www.aanma.org

Ask your doctor or contact your local or state department of health.

Keeping a clean home can reduce some allergens



¹Source: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI). *The Allergy Report: Science Based Findings on the Diagnosis & Treatment of Allergic Disorders*, 1996-2001