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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indoor</th>
<th>Outdoor</th>
<th>Foods</th>
<th>Medications</th>
<th>Insect Stings and Bites</th>
<th>Contact with Skin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dust</td>
<td>pollen</td>
<td>milk</td>
<td>antibiotics</td>
<td>bees</td>
<td>plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dust mites</td>
<td>(from flowering</td>
<td>citrus fruits</td>
<td>(like Penicillin)</td>
<td>wasps</td>
<td>(like poison ivy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mold</td>
<td>trees and grass)</td>
<td>eggs</td>
<td>anti-seizure drugs</td>
<td>hornets</td>
<td>cosmetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pets (most often</td>
<td></td>
<td>peanuts</td>
<td>anesthetics</td>
<td>yellow jackets</td>
<td>skin-care products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>animal skin flakes</td>
<td>mold</td>
<td>wheat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>jewelry</td>
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<tr>
<td>or “dander”)</td>
<td></td>
<td>fish &amp; shellfish</td>
<td></td>
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<td>latex (gloves or</td>
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<td>condoms)</td>
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### 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.

### 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

### Keeping a clean home can reduce some allergens

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.

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