



TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR ALLERGIES

What are allergies?

An **Allergy** is an exaggerated response from our body to a substance that, in most individuals, causes no difficulty.

What is an allergen?

An allergen is a substance that may trigger an allergic reaction.

How does one develop allergies?

An allergen is introduced into the body through different ways, such as the nose, bronchi, or conjunctive. After it enters the body, the white blood cells recognize it as foreign and begin producing antibodies (IgE) whose normal function helps the body defend itself against foreign invaders (i.e. microbes). After encountering this allergen for the second or third time in the system, it makes a complex allergen and antibody and binds to the mast cell and the mast cell releases a substance from its pockets. One such substance released is called **histamine** and histamines generate an allergic reaction.

During the initial exposure to the allergen the production of antibodies is low so nothing will happen. After the second or third exposure to this allergen the antibodies increase and an allergic reaction occurs.

What are the symptoms?

- **Runny Nose**
- **Watery Eyes**
- **Congestion**
- **Sneezing**
- **Allergic Rhinitis** (allergy of nose)
- **Allergic Conjunctivitis** (allergy of the lining of the eyeball)
- **Coughing**
- **Wheezing**
- **Difficulty Breathing**
- **Allergic Asthma**
- **Hives**
- **Allergic Dermatitis**
- **Swelling of lips and/or tongue**
- **Drop in Blood Pressure**
- **Anaphylaxis** (most severe form)

Who gets the allergies?

Anyone, but some allergies run in families. Some are more prone to develop than others are.

Children whose parents have allergies run a greater risk of developing allergies themselves. If neither parent has any allergies, 15-18% of children will develop allergies. If only one parent is affected the risk increases to 35% and if both parents have allergies the risk is increased to 75-80 %.

Take control of your allergies!

- *Know your allergens and avoid them*
- *Understand your treatment options! Stop the process once it happens.*
 1. Decrease production of antibodies
 2. Stop mast cells from releasing granules
 3. Give medication to stop the effect of histamine on tissue and organ

Know your allergens

- Year-round indoor allergens
 1. Animals
 2. Feathers
 3. House dust
 4. Molds
- Seasonal outdoor allergens
 1. Pollens

Avoid the allergens

- **Know your local pollen counts**
- **Stay indoors anytime pollen count are high** (early morning, windy days)
- **Close car and house windows**
- **Don't hang sheets outside to dry**
- **Don't mow the lawn**
- **Clean the house at least once a week**
- **Replace wall to wall carpeting with hardwood floors, tile or linoleum**
- **Use allergen-proof covers for the mattress, box spring and pillows**
- **Wash pets that have fur once a week**
- **Do not let the pets inside your bedroom**

Understand your treatment options

- *Antihistamines*
 - Sedating*
 1. Benadryl
 2. Tavist
 3. Atarax
 - Non-sedating*
 1. Allegra
 2. Zyrtec
 3. Claritin
- *Decongestants*
 1. Sudafed

2. Dimetapp
 3. Robitussin
 4. Afrin
- **Corticosteroids**
 - To be taken by mouth or I.V.
 - 1. Prednisone
 - For local use (nose)
 - 1. Flonase
 - 2. Nasonex
 - 3. Rhinocort
 - 4. Vancenase, etc.
 - **Mast cell inhibitors**
 - **Allergy Shots**
 - **Other Drugs**
 1. Singulair
 2. Atrovent
 3. Nasalcrom

Allergy Shots

Small amounts of allergens are given and increased gradually so the body will get used to it. Small amounts will not trigger allergic reactions. If you increase allergens day by day or week by week white blood cells will not react anymore and therefore not produce IgE. Your body will gradually get used to the allergens and not produce allergic reactions. Treatment can be as long as six (6) months to one (1) year and there are frequent relapses.

Ask your doctor

- **How does your medication work**
- **What are the possible side effects of your medication**
- **How to avoid allergen exposure**

Make sure to follow the treatment plan your doctor designed together with you.

Information courtesy of Vlad C. Radulescu, M.D.

ATTENTION: This web page is intended to be used for health information ONLY. If you or a family member has a medical emergency, please call your doctor or 911, or your local emergency service number.