



ALLERGY

“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.¹
- 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, for example. Common reactions include a stuffy nose, itchy eyes, or a skin rash. Severe allergic reactions (see below) require immediate medical attention (see below).

Many people who have allergies also have asthma. Allergic reactions may trigger asthma attacks, where a swelling and tightening of your airways 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, redness of the skin, hives, confusion, anxiety, lightheadness, stomach cramps, and nausea. If these symptoms are present, go immediately to a doctor or emergency room for treatment.

continued on back



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



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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.

- 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, medicine, and home care product labels carefully to avoid ingredients that cause reactions.
 - Use mattress mite-proof and pillow covers and wash bedding in hot water.
- Keep a clean home (for more tips, see “Asthma” fact sheet).
 - Control pests such as mice and cockroaches.
 - Vacuum floors and upholstery regularly using a HEPA (High Efficiency Particle Air) filter or micro-filtration bag, if possible.
 - Consider replacing carpet with smooth, easily cleaned flooring.
 - Avoid having mold, cigarette smoke, and hazardous 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/healthyhomes 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 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