



# 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?<sup>1</sup>
- 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"> <li>■ dust</li> <li>■ dust mites</li> <li>■ mold</li> <li>■ pets (most often animal skin flakes or "dander")</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ pollen (from flowering trees and grass)</li> <li>■ mold</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ milk</li> <li>■ citrus fruits</li> <li>■ eggs</li> <li>■ peanuts</li> <li>■ wheat</li> <li>■ fish &amp; shellfish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ antibiotics (like Penicillin)</li> <li>■ anti-seizure drugs</li> <li>■ anesthetics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ bees</li> <li>■ wasps</li> <li>■ hornets</li> <li>■ yellow jackets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ plants (like poison ivy)</li> <li>■ cosmetics</li> <li>■ skin-care products</li> <li>■ jewelry</li> <li>■ latex (gloves or condoms)</li> </ul>

## 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](http://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](http://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/childhealth)

US Environmental Protection Agency  
[www.epa.gov/children](http://www.epa.gov/children)

## Other Resources

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (AAAAI)  
[www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org)

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America  
[www.aafa.org](http://www.aafa.org)

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

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

## Keeping a clean home can reduce some allergens



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