

Some Simple Thoughts on Allergy

You Are Not Alone!

First of all, you are not alone. In fact, you have *lots* of company. About one out of every five people in the United States has some kind of allergy. Not only that, but the number of things to which people are allergic continues to grow!

The old-stand-bys like pollens, house dust, molds, and animal hairs are still with us, and now they are joined by a huge array of plastics, chemicals, drugs, and air pollutants.

Everyone comes in contact with these things. But as you know, not everyone becomes allergic. Why do you suppose that is?

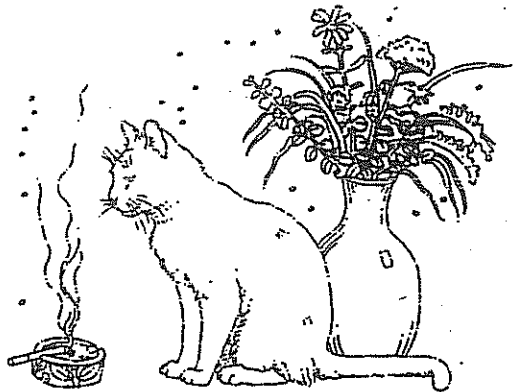


What Are Allergies?

Allergies are reactions to things (substances) around you in your environment. These things to which you react are called "allergens." They may include dust, mold, pollens, pets, foods, tobacco, and others.

Coming in contact with these things may cause you to sneeze, wheeze, have itchy eyes and a runny nose, or be irritable. You may also have skin reactions like hives, eczema, or a rash. These reactions can happen when you breathe, touch or swallow any of those things which are allergens for you.

You may have just one of these problems such as wheezing (asthma), or you may have several at once.



Why me?

You may wonder why you sneeze and wheeze when you are around certain things, while your friends can enjoy themselves without any problems at all. No one really knows why some people react and others do not. Doctors do know that the tendency to be allergic is inherited.

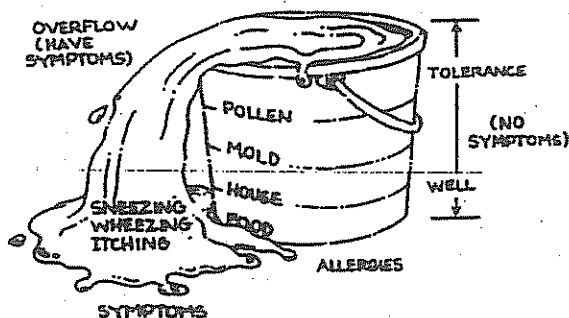


Allergies may occur at any time during your life. They may improve on their own at any time, or they may get worse. Your problems may go away for a while, and then come back later in a different form. For example, a child may have eczema which goes away, and then later in life he may have hay fever.

What Causes Allergic Reactions?

Your body can be thought of as a bucket which gets filled up with allergens. As you breathe, eat, or touch these allergens, your bucket begins to fill.

But just like a bucket, your body can hold only so much before it overflows. When you get full of allergens, your bucket overflows and your allergy symptoms appear. You begin to sneeze and wheeze, snifle and snort, itch and scratch, and cough and choke.



How Can I Tell If I Have Allergies?

If you have any of the problems we have talked about (asthma, hay fever, hives, eczema, etc.), chances are you have allergies. A trained allergist can determine whether you have allergies and what is the best method of treatment.

