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Understanding Allergies

A comprehensive guide



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Putting *Allergies* in Focus.

Allergies are a common and often misunderstood medical condition. They occur when the body's immune system reacts abnormally to substances that are usually harmless. This guide will help you understand what allergies are, the different types, and offer a deep dive into hay fever and its treatments.

In recent years, allergies have become increasingly prevalent worldwide, affecting people of all ages and backgrounds. Seasonal allergies, food intolerances, and environmental triggers can disrupt daily routines and overall well-being. This guide provides a comprehensive overview of the most common types of allergies, with a special focus on hay fever—one of the most widespread allergies.



What are *Allergies*?

An allergy is an immune system response to a foreign substance known as an allergen. While these allergens are typically harmless to most people, they trigger an exaggerated immune reaction in allergic individuals. This response can range from mild symptoms to severe, life-threatening reactions.

Seasonal Allergies

Also known as hay fever these are triggered by airborne allergens like pollen. Symptoms typically occur during spring or summer.

Food Allergies

These involve an immune response to specific foods. Symptoms range from mild (rash, nausea) to severe (anaphylaxis).

Skin Allergies

Common conditions include eczema, contact dermatitis, and hives that result from direct contact with an allergen.

Respiratory Allergies

Triggered by airborne substances like dust mites, mould, or pet dander, these can cause asthma or allergic rhinitis.

Insect Allergies

Triggered by airborne substances like dust mites, mould, or pet dander, these can cause asthma or allergic rhinitis.

Common Allergies

Pollen

Dust Mites

Mould

Pet Dander

Food

Spotlight on Hayfever.

Hay fever, or allergic rhinitis, affects millions worldwide and is one of the most common allergic conditions.

What triggers hayfever?

Hay fever is triggered by allergens such as:

- Tree pollen (spring)
- Grass pollen (summer)
- Weed pollen (autumn)
- Mould spores

Recognising Hay Fever Symptoms

- Sneezing and runny nose
- Itchy eyes, nose, and throat
- Nasal congestion
- Fatigue (due to disrupted sleep)

Hayfever Survival Guide: Tips for Everyday Life

- ✓ Check pollen forecasts, monitor daily pollen levels and limit outdoor activities on high-pollen days.
- ✓ Shower and change clothes after spending time outside, to remove pollen from skin and hair.
- ✓ Keep windows closed especially during early mornings and evenings when pollen counts are higher.
- ✓ High-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters can help trap airborne allergens.
- ✓ Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from pollen exposure when outdoors.
- ✓ Smearing a thin layer of petroleum jelly inside your nostrils can trap pollen and prevent it from entering your airways.

Allergy diagnosis involves

Medical History: Understanding symptoms and family history

Skin Prick Test: Introducing allergens under the skin to check for reactions

Blood Tests: Measuring specific IgE antibodies to allergens



Allergy *Management*

Your first line of defence when it comes to allergies is **avoidance**. Minimise exposure to known allergens where possible, however when exposed there are a range of medications and treatments to help.

Medications: *What Works and How*

- ✔ **Antihistamines:** Relieve sneezing, itching, and runny nose.
- ✔ **Decongestants:** Reduce nasal swelling.
- ✔ **Nasal Corticosteroids:** Control inflammation in the nasal passages.
- ✔ **Leukotriene Receptor Antagonists:** Manage allergic asthma and hay fever.
- ✔ **Epinephrine (Adrenaline):** Life-saving treatment for severe anaphylaxis.
- ✔ **Topical Corticosteroids:** Soothe skin inflammation from contact allergies.

Immunotherapy: A Long-Term Solution

For severe allergies, immunotherapy gradually desensitises the immune system to allergens. This treatment is effective for pollen, dust mites, pet dander, and insect venom allergies.

Everyday Habits to Reduce Allergies

- * Regular cleaning to reduce dust mites
- * Washing bedding in hot water
- * Keeping pets out of bedrooms and regularly grooming them
- * Using fragrance-free skincare products to avoid skin flare-ups
- * Carrying an epinephrine auto-injector if at risk of anaphylaxis

What can Doctor Care Anywhere *do for you?*



Consultations

- Up to 20-minute-long appointments, by video or phone, giving you time to discuss the right outcome for you.
- Appointments with GPs and ACPs available 24/7, so there's no need to take time off work to attend a consultation.



Prescriptions

- It's up to you how and where you get your prescription.
- Delivered straight to your home or work.
- Pick up your medication from your local pharmacy.



Referrals & medical records

- Download and share your private referrals and fit notes.
- Access your appointment notes whenever you need to.
- Get seamless access to tests, scans, and mental health services when you need them.



Allergy Testing with Medichecks

If you are concerned an allergy could be to blame for your symptoms, their range of Allergy Blood Tests can help you confirm an allergic reaction and help determine the cause.

Book your allergy test with 10% off today

Use DCA10 for 10% discount on all tests