



# Allergies & Asthma



## Allergies

Allergy is characterized by an overreaction of the human immune system to a foreign protein substance ("allergen") that is eaten, breathed into the lungs, injected or touched. This immune overreaction can result in symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, itchy eyes, runny nose and scratchy throat. In severe cases it can also result in rashes, hives, lower blood pressure, difficulty breathing, asthma attacks, and even death.

- \* There are no cures for allergies. Allergies can be managed with proper prevention and treatment.
- \* Allergies have a genetic component. If only one parent has allergies of any type, chances are 1 in 3 that each child will have an allergy. If both parents have allergies, it is much more likely (7 in 10) that their children will have allergies.
- \* More Americans than ever before say they are suffering from allergies. It is among the country's most common, yet often overlooked, diseases.

## Prevalence

- \* Indoor and Outdoor Allergies – (Allergic rhinitis; seasonal/perennial allergies; hay fever; nasal allergies) Approximately 40 million Americans have indoor/outdoor allergies as their primary allergy. The most common indoor/outdoor allergy triggers are: tree, grass and weed pollen; mold spores; dust mite and cockroach allergen; and, cat, dog and rodent dander.
- \* Skin Allergies – (Atopic dermatitis; eczema; hives; urticaria; contact allergies) Approximately 7% of allergy sufferers have skin allergies as their primary allergy. Plants such as poison ivy, oak and sumac are the most common skin allergy triggers. However, skin contact with cockroach and dust mite allergen, certain foods or latex may also trigger symptoms of skin allergy.
- \* Food and Drug Allergies – Approximately 6% of allergy sufferers have food/drug allergies as their primary allergy. 90% of all food allergy reactions are caused by 8 foods: milk, soy, eggs, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shellfish. For drug allergies, penicillin is the most common allergy trigger.
- \* Latex Allergy – Approximately 4% of allergy sufferers have latex allergy as their primary allergy. An estimated 10% of healthcare workers suffer from latex allergy.

- \* Insect Allergies – Approximately 4% of allergy sufferers have insect allergies as their primary allergy (bee/wasp stings and venomous ant bites; cockroach and dust mite allergen may also cause nasal or skin allergy symptoms.)
- \* Eye Allergies – (Allergic conjunctivitis; ocular allergies) – Approximately 4% of allergy sufferers have eye allergies as their primary allergy, often caused by many of the same triggers as indoor/outdoor allergies.

## Asthma

Asthma is characterized by inflammation of the air passages resulting in the temporary narrowing of the airways that transport air from the nose and mouth to the lungs. Asthma symptoms can be caused by allergens or irritants that are inhaled into the lungs, resulting in inflamed, clogged and constricted airways. Symptoms include difficulty breathing, wheezing, coughing tightness in the chest. In severe cases, asthma can be deadly.

- \* There is no cure for asthma, but asthma can be managed with proper prevention and treatment.
- \* Asthma has a genetic component. If only one parent has asthma, chances are 1 in 3 that each child will have asthma. If both parents have asthma, it is much more likely (7 in 10) that their children will have asthma.
- \* More Americans than ever before say they are suffering from asthma. It is one of this country's most common and costly diseases.

## Prevalence

- \* An estimated 20 million Americans suffer from asthma (1 in 15 Americans), and 50% of asthma cases are "allergic-asthma." The prevalence of asthma has been increasing since the early 1980s across all age, sex and racial groups.
- \* Asthma is more common among adult women than adult men.
- \* Nearly 5 million asthma sufferers are under age 18. It is the most common chronic childhood disease, affecting more than one child in 20.
- \* Asthma is slightly more prevalent among African Americans than Caucasians.
- \* Ethnic differences in asthma prevalence, morbidity and mortality are highly correlated with poverty, urban air quality, indoor allergens, and lack of patient education and inadequate medical care.

Source: [www.AAFA.org](http://www.AAFA.org)

Courtesy of Wellness Proposals