

You've Got Allergies

So, the doctor said you have allergies. What are allergies and what can you do about them? The answers can be difficult. Let us try to explain allergies.

What causes allergies?

What causes the body to react to a substance is not really well understood. We do know that almost anything can cause some type of allergic response. Allergens (substances that cause allergies) can be eaten, inhaled, injected or come into contact with a person's skin. When the body perceives a substance as "foreign" it creates chemicals called antibodies. These antibodies "attack" the invaders. This is an allergic reaction. Some of the most common allergens are:

- Venom from insect stings
- Molds
- Pollen (especially this time of year!)
- Animal dander or saliva (dog, cat, rabbits and horses)
- Foods
- Medicines
- House dust mites

Allergies can run in families. If a parent has an allergy problem it is more likely their children will have allergies.

If you have ever had itchy, watery eyes and a runny nose that will not go away, sometimes called a "summer cold", you have allergies. If you have ever had the hives, eczema, poison ivy or asthma you have allergies.

Allergic reactions can be as simple as a runny nose or rash, but can also sometimes cause difficulty breathing and even death.

If you have allergies you are not alone. Millions of people have some kind of allergy or another. Talk to your primary care provider. They have medicines and strategies that can help.