

*Direct Hit Series*



*How To Ease  
Your Allergies*

*“50 Million Americans Estimated  
To Have Allergies”*

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## **How to Ease Your Allergies!**

What are allergies?

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Allergies and Asthma

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## **What are Allergies?**

Stories of friends and family members unable to enjoy certain foods, participate in activities, or participate in particular environments are all too common.

In fact, 50 million Americans are estimated to have allergies. This means that a great number of people live with certain lifestyle 'limitations' by what we've come to know as an allergy, which is what an adverse reaction by the immune system to any foreign substance is called.

There is no clear apparent medical reason why people contract allergies, but one thing remains clear: the condition is indiscriminate in its coverage and may affect us regardless of age, gender, or race. Commonly, however, the allergy manifests in our infancy or childhood, although some symptoms may appear at any age or may reappear after any period of apparent inactivity.

Most allergies are largely insignificant and may be dealt with by simple lifestyle choices; however, there is a possibility of them either adversely affecting our daily life, or perhaps life-threatening conditions.

This is the reason why we must first understand how an allergic reaction happens, and more importantly, what we can do by ourselves or with the help of a doctor to detect allergies. In such a way, we will be able to make sure we are not on the threshold of any harm, but also enjoy life without having to worry about dramatic allergic reactions.

When allergies come to the fore, we usually say that it has been 'triggered', implying that the body has been exposed to a 'trigger' that activated the allergy from within. These 'triggers', known as potential allergens, may be animal fur and dander, feathers, mites, house dust, pollen, cockroach droppings, insect stings, chemicals (like perfumes, and even our everyday cosmetics like shampoos and soaps!) and dyes, medication, synthetic fiber, and a huge variety of food and drinks.

In the event of an allergy, our immune system, which normally wards off unwanted foreign substances in our bodies like parasites, bacteria, and dirt, mistakenly identifies common harmless objects (what we have identified as allergens earlier on) as something it must destroy. It then releases antibodies that cause bodily manifestations or 'symptoms'.

Knowing what happens in our bodies, we can now better understand how to detect allergies when possible symptoms surface. In essence, we are familiar with some common symptoms that have been associated with allergies.

These include swollen, red, itchy lumps in the skin, tissue swelling, runny nose, rash, hives, watery or itchy eyes, and sneezing. Alone or in various combinations, you may consider these as symptoms of allergies if, when repeatedly exposed to certain substances, your body manifests any of the prior conditions. Some people, for example, notice increased appearance of these symptoms over seasonal changes.

These seasonal allergies may help you learn more about what particular allergens are being triggered. An allergic reaction that you may experience only upon the arrival of Spring may imply that you are allergic to grass, pollen, or a variety of other natural substances you may encounter when you are enjoying some outdoor activities that you only engage in during the Spring. Seasonal allergies are discussed in depth in an upcoming chapter.

### **How would you know if you have an allergy?**

Allergy is a term broadly used in describing a reaction of body tissues that is unusual to a substance that has no distinctive or noticeable effect on other humans. According to studies, about 17 out of every 100 Americans are allergic, or hypersensitive, to some substances which are known to cause unusual reactions.

These substances, more known as allergens, range from various irritants, such as pollens, mold spores, insect venoms, animal dander, and house dust. There are some who are allergic to substances in soap. Some react differently to the smell of a flower.

Below are the most common types of allergies.

- Food Allergies - ignited by certain food types
- Anaphylaxis - triggered by drugs, food, or insect stings
- Respiratory Allergies - triggered by allergens which are airborne
- Contact Allergies - triggered by skin-affecting allergens

- Insect Sting Allergies - triggered by insect venom

Here are mild as well as severe symptoms that are associated with these common types of allergy.

Since each person may have unique reactions from these allergies, your symptoms might vary or may have some or all of the listed reactions. Consult your doctor if the symptoms have become persistent or severe.

### Food Allergies

Symptoms of an allergy caused by certain food types usually happen within some minutes after you ingested food allergens, although there are some that would only occur after several hours. The symptoms may only happen to areas around the lips, mouth, and digestive tract, or could also involve other body areas. Foods that commonly result to allergic reactions are eggs, nuts, milk, fish, soy, shellfish, and wheat.

### Mild Symptoms:

- Tingling, itching, or swelling of your mouth, tongue, lips, or throat
- Tightness feeling in your throat
- Difficulty speaking or swallowing
- Nausea
- Indigestion and abdominal cramps
- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Skin rashes

- Coughing, congestion, wheezing, or sneezing
- Runny, stuffy, or itchy nose

#### Severe Symptoms:

- Breathing difficulties
- Sweating, dizziness, and faintness
- Rapid or sudden heart rate increase
- Sudden inability or hoarseness to speak
- Extreme and sudden facial itching and swelling
- Anaphylaxis

#### Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a severe, sudden, and potentially fatal reaction that has symptoms affecting various body areas. Symptoms commonly manifest very quickly after some exposure to allergens and may include extreme itching all over your body, total swelling of the body, respiratory distress, swelling, and may cause shock that is life endangering. Anaphylaxis requires urgent medical attention. The reaction is most commonly a result of drug, insect sting, or food allergies.

#### Symptoms include:

- Skin flushing
- Itching or tingling around your body
- Mouth swelling as well as in the throat area

- Difficulty breathing and swallowing
- Tightening of your chest
- Agitation, confusion, or lightheadedness
- Nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, or diarrhea
- Irregular heartbeat

In some severe cases shock might occur. The swelling of your body's bronchial tissues might cause you to choke before losing consciousness. An abrupt drop in your blood pressure as a result of dilated blood vessels might also cause you to lose consciousness.

In cases that cause anaphylactic shock, it is necessary that you get treatment immediately. Without prompt medical attention, anaphylactic shock might prove fatal.

### Respiratory Allergies

Symptoms of respiratory allergies frequently occur after a few hours of exposure and usually triggered by allergens that are airborne like animal dander, plant pollens, mold spores, and dust mites.

#### Mild Symptoms:

- Wheezing or coughing
- Sneezing
- Itchy throat or nose
- Postnasal drip

- Smell sense is impaired
- Hoarseness in the throat
- Congestion
- Red, itchy, swollen, or watery eyes
- Clogged or runny nose with thin and clear mucus
- Conjunctivitis
- Fatigue

#### Severe Symptoms:

- Shortness and difficulty in breathing
- Chest tightness and pain

#### Contact Allergies

Symptoms that occur as a result of contact allergies usually happen within a few minutes after your allergen exposure, although there are symptoms that may occur after several hours. Common allergens are poison ivy and poison oak, rubber, nickel, latex, preservatives, dyes, fragrances, medications, and cosmetics like perfume and hair dye. Nickel, a metal frequently used in buttons, jewelry, hairpins, zippers, metal clips and snaps, is the frequent source of the allergy. Sun exposure might also give you reactions.

#### Mild Symptoms:

- A bumpy or itchy rash
- Fluid-filled bumps on your skin
- Swelling or redness of your skin
- Hives
- Eczema

#### Severe Symptoms:

- Anaphylaxis

#### Insect Sting Allergies

Symptoms caused by insect sting allergies usually happen after a few minutes after you got stung, although there may be symptoms happening after some hours. Insect venoms cause these allergic reactions, like those from wasps, bees, hornets, fire ants, and yellow jackets.

#### Mild Symptoms:

- Pain, swelling, and itching at the area of the sting or at times, over larger body areas such as the forearm or entire hand
- Fever
- Fatigue or nausea
- Hives, swelling, and itching in body areas apart from the area that got stung
- Chest tightness

- Difficulty of breath
- Tongue swelling

Severe Symptoms:

- Anaphylaxis

It is of paramount importance to know that many allergies have similar symptoms with other conditions and diseases. That is why it would be best to consult your doctor to assess your condition and give a proper diagnosis.

### **What Causes Allergies?**

The immune system of a person with an allergy tries to combat allergens. It looks upon the small driftwood of everyday life – house dust, pollen, animal dander, and mold – as outsiders that are sure to do some dreadful damage.

In order to recognize and capture these strangers, it is important that people know who the culprits are. They should try to educate themselves on how allergies work and what causes them because these are the only means to find the solution to the problem.

Basically, allergies are agitated reactions of the immune system to certain foreign substances to the human body. These stuffs are known as “allergens.”

Allergens are then classified into four categories based on where they have come from. By knowing these four classifications of allergens, an individual could identify where he is allergic.

The four classifications of allergens are physical, biological, mental, and chemical. All of these four resources of allergens trigger even the slightest allergy in the human body. There are some people that heavily react to these allergens while others do not even realize they are having an allergic attack.

The first classification of allergens is physical. Here, allergens can come from technological devices such as infrared, microwaves and radio, atomic radiation, visible light, X-rays, ultraviolet light, etc.

The allergens that can be derived from these sources would bring on an allergic reaction to an individual who responds whenever they get in contact with any of these devices.

The second classification is the biological sources. Allergens can be derived from infections, food and beverages, plant and animal proteins, etc.

In this classification, biological sources are the main resource of allergens. Usually, the known culprits are the animal proteins in the animal dander or flakes of dead skin, urine, or saliva of the animal. These proteins are usually spread throughout the house wherever a pet roams.

Hence, even if there is no cat present in the room, a person who is allergic to these kinds of allergens will have an allergy attack because of the remains of the animal's proteins.

The next classification is the allergens that come from mental sources. The allergy attack usually happens when the allergens are too excessive that it devastates the immune system. Hence, it is having difficulty to cope with its normal function.

No wonder why excessive emotions can also trigger an asthma attack, a known disease caused by allergies.

The last classifications are those that come from chemical resources. There are people who are allergic to some types of medications. That is why it is extremely important to test the product first before administering it to the patient to avoid more serious problems that might even cause death.

Knowing all of these causes of allergies is definitely important in order to avoid further problems. The first step in preventing contact with the numerous allergens is to figure out what they are.

After figuring them out, the next step is to stay away from them as much as possible. Ignorance of allergies and allergens will definitely cause serious trouble, especially if the problem is really risky.

This should be resolved because there are people who are not yet aware what causes their allergies. There are also instances wherein they do not know that allergens are already present in their home, and they do not know how to combat them.

For this reason, it is also important to submit a person for allergy testing, especially those who are showing visible signs of allergic reaction. This is when an allergy test can yield much useful information.

Normally, if a person is having persistent allergic symptoms, but he cannot isolate the allergen, it is a good idea to see an allergist, get tested, and find out what the allergens are. In this way, people can easily find out what causes their allergy and resolve the problem.

### **Who is at risk for allergies?**

Among all known diseases, allergies are placed among the most universally manifesting diseases among humans. It does not discriminate among the individuals to be infected. People of all ages, gender, culture, nationality and skin color have equal chances of developing them.

Perhaps, the determining factor in the emergence of the symptoms characteristic of a specific type of allergy is the level of exposure to certain allergen.

Allergic people develop characteristic symptoms which are not found in a normal individual should they be exposed to a certain allergens.

For example, an individual allergic to dust develops typical condition such as sneezing, shortness of breath, abnormal or increased production of nasal and bronchial mucus enough to suffocate an individual.

Allergen is a type of antigen. Antigen is a particle which the body recognizes as foreign and attacks it via its own biological machineries.

Who are at Risk in Developing Allergies?

Not all individuals react the same to different allergens. While some individuals may only develop slight symptoms upon allergic attack, others exposed to the same dosage can become a life-threatening factor for them.

Through the study of allergies and allergic attacks, it is apparent that some individuals have a higher probability of acquiring an allergic condition compared to other individuals exposed to the same particle.

Each age level is particularly prone to a certain allergen. This fact should provide you with an idea on how you can at least minimize, if not perfectly avoid, the attack of allergy.

Age is one factor in the development of such condition since it is one of the critical stages by which an individual starts biologically identifying the components of his or her surroundings. Younger individuals are more

prone to developing allergic reactions to particulate materials in their environment.

Research shows that 7 to 8 out of 10 newly born infants have a large predisposition in acquiring hypersensitivity to anything in their surroundings. Moreover, 1 out of 7 American adults suffer from at least one type of allergic condition.

Record shows that more than 35 million Americans suffer from allergic rhinitis (discussed in an upcoming chapter;) developing extreme biological withdrawal for the presence of pollens. Some adults are allergic to food and other processed food products such as milk (lactose intolerance).

Some even develop allergic reactions among substances used in clothing such as color dyes and bleaching chemical agent (contact dermatitis) and other forms of medications such as penicillin and other antibiotics (drug hypersensitivity).

Some young adults who have experienced lesser attacks or were not put into any allergic state earlier in their life are apt to develop such condition should adequate trigger attacks (allergen particles) are present.

#### Recent Developments

Current research at the Medical College of Georgia, Section of Allergy and Immunology shows that children who grew up with dogs and cats, typical

allergic sources, have significantly shown to have lesser allergic tendencies than children who don't have any pets at home.

More than 50% of the 474 children who were placed on an experimental study from birth until 7 years old did not develop allergic reactions to dogs and showed an increased resistance to outdoor allergens such as dust, fungus, and mites, among others.

## **ALLERGIES AND ASTHMA**

Among all allergic and respiratory-related diseases, asthma makes up the majority. Asthma is perhaps one of the leading causes of respiratory illness among children and young adults although this condition may progress a lifetime.

While it is considered an allergy, asthma is so prevalent (especially among children) that it deserves to be addressed in its own chapter.

Proper care and health maintenance is essential to warding off the debilitating repercussions of exposure to irritants which could trigger all the symptoms underlying such disease.

The following information provides you with all of the basic need-to-know information about asthma, its exact nature, progression of the disease and current medical treatment in place to treat the symptoms manifested by patients.

What exactly is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic lung disease characterized by difficulty of breathing, wheezing, coughing, and increased mucus production during recurrent attacks. These same symptoms can cause death in some cases depending on the severity of the amount of allergens involved and antihistamine molecules produced by the body enough to block the airways for the transportation of air to the lungs.

Around 7 to 10% of children experience the condition and current statistics shows an increasing number of sufferers. Asthma does not seem to be an inherited disease since a family member, who apparently do not have relatives exhibiting the symptoms of the disease, can be infected anytime should he or she is exposed to environmental factors triggering the onset of the disease.

People with this medical condition have a very sensitive bronchial pathway. Presence of molecules or particles recognized by the body as foreign can set a huge allergic attack characteristic of the condition described above.

From a medical point of view, asthma is a type of allergy. Allergy is defined as a change in the body's biological activity due to the presence of one or more types of allergens (substance promoting the symptoms of allergy).

According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, more than 50 million Americans are suffering from allergy and currently 20 million individuals, comprising the wide-range of America's population experiences the symptoms of asthma.

#### Causes of Asthma

The causes of asthma are the same as for other allergies we have discussed. Causes can be in the form of dust, certain chemicals, scents, and various odors. Other trigger factors may be in the form of temperature. Cold or hot air can provoke allergic reactions to patients sensitive to them. In any case, allergic reactions are specific to individuals and not all individuals suffering from allergy responds universally to all types allergens.

Particularly interesting clients are the ones allergic to some forms of physical activity like exercise. In the same manner, emotional state is one factor for some individuals in order for the characteristic asthma symptoms to set in.

Among all these influential agents, smoke has been found to occupy the universally recognized trigger attacks for patients with asthma especially for children. At least 8 out of 10 children are more prone to developing asthmatic conditions once exposed to these agents.

Perhaps, as society becomes industrialized and increased fume emissions accelerates, more and more people will develop symptoms characteristic of this disease.

### Who Are at Risk?

Statistical data shows that asthma is not a discriminating disease. It affects people of all ages, race, culture, color and gender.

Especially predisposed to developing such illness are people who are exposed to heavy car or industrial emissions and filthy surroundings. 10 to 12% of children averaging 18 years of age are the common target.

Additionally, individuals whose relatives have a history of such illness are more at risk in manifesting such condition in the future.

### Latest Diagnostic Device and Treatments

Gone are the days when people die of symptoms and complications involved in asthmatic attacks. Due to the development of studies and research in asthma and other forms of allergies, treatment and varying levels of diagnosis were introduced to properly treat the symptoms typical of asthma.

But basically, one first hand "cure" or initial activity to be done in the management of asthma is to avoid the source of the allergens to which the individual is allergic to.

For example, if the individual is allergic to dust, staying indoors may help reduce the probability of allergic occurrence. In any case, consulting a

family doctor or an immunologist will provide you the most practical and wise information regarding dealing with individuals experiencing such condition and recommendations which will keep you from attacks you would rather stay away from.

### **How serious is an allergy to bees?**

First things first: bee sting allergy becomes serious to the highly allergic individual.

Bees aren't exactly fatal insects. They are simply looking for food, but once one intervenes or tramples on their nests, trouble comes in. It has been reported that there are approximately 40 people who die from bee sting allergy every year.

Once a person has been stung, he develops allergy to the venom of the insect. Other than bees, these are the insects that can trigger violent allergic reactions: wasps, yellow jackets, fire ants and hornets. All of them are classified in the Hymenoptera order.

Bees are the most common stinging insects and they are not that violent unless a person provokes them. It is not so hard to spot a bee - just look for a hairy-bodied insect with yellow and black markings. They hover over flowers and clovers. Here is an interesting fact: they die as soon as they sting.

Bee sting allergic reactions include the following: dizzy spells, itching, swelling and welts. Such reactions will go on for a few minutes. The severe reactions set in when the person experiences trouble in breathing develops low blood pressure, headache, cramps, vomiting, and anaphylactic shock and finally succumbs to death.

The severe reaction to bee sting allergy happens to persons who are very allergic to the venom, older people with heart and chest problems or those who get multiple stings.

It is important to know what to do if a bee sting occurs. Here are the following tips people should keep in mind:

1. Keep away from bee-friendly areas.

If one is allergic to bee stings, he must stay away from places where bees are prolific. If a swarm of bees are headed one's way, he just has to run fast as bees fly slowly anyway. If a bee continues approaching, he must stay put. He must never swat the bees as they might get frightened. If a bee lands on his skin, he must blow it off.

2. If stung, know what to do.

This includes spotting the barbed stinger and flicking it off the skin. Remember that if stung in the neck or head, the danger is increased tenfold.

The stung person must never squeeze the affected area for it might just permit the venom to penetrate the skin. There should be an application of ice or cold compress to the affected area.

The most effective treatment for bee sting allergies is through hyposensitization injection or specific immunotherapy (SIT). It is executed weekly then every six weeks for the next 3 or 5 years until a person receives 96 percent protection from bee stings.

If professional medical help cannot be given immediately, you must look for a tourniquet and apply it to a limb. There are also preloaded adrenalin syringes like EpiPen and Ana-Guard that are specifically for emergency use. Puffing the Medihaler-Epi, an adrenalin inhaler, might help relieve the throat swelling and chest tightening. Cortisone and Phenergan, fast-acting and effective antihistamines, can work for less severe reactions.

### 3. Be prepared.

The person must make sure an insecticide spray is handy. A "bee cloth" which is used to trap bees and prevent stings can work as well.

Bees are attracted to floral fragrances so if one is more prone to bee stings, he has to keep the perfume to a minimum. He must wear white clothing. Since bees love bright colors it's best to avoid them. He must keep from eating fruits outdoors and applying hair tonics on places where bees are found.

Children must be warned that they should not place their fingers inside flowers because that's where bees get their pollen. Walking barefoot on clover fields is a no-no. Food must be covered outdoors. By midsummer time, mowing lawns or trimming hedges must be avoided.

Upon coming across a bee hive, it's best not to disturb it. There are bee keepers who will remove it if one wishes to.

4. People prone to bee stings must know prophylactic management.

If a person always attracts bees and develops serious reactions, he must have an adrenalin injection so he can treat himself should the need arise. There are cases when antihistamine pills will do. He must also wear a Medic Alert bracelet.

The seriousness of a bee allergy can be warded off immediately if one knows the proper treatment and avoidance measures.

### **What is allergic rhinitis?**

Allergic rhinitis, more commonly known as "hay fever," happens when you breathe in something you are allergic to. The inside of your nose becomes inflamed or swollen.

When this happens, the body's immune system overreacts to specific particles such as plant pollens, molds, dust mites, animal hair, industrial chemicals, tobacco smoke, foods, medicines, and even insect venom.

Allergic rhinitis affects 40 million people in the United States and is an extremely common condition, affecting approximately 20% of the population. While allergic rhinitis is not a life-threatening condition, complications can occur and the condition can impair one's quality of life leading to a number of indirect costs. Recently, the total direct and indirect cost of allergic rhinitis was estimated at around \$5 billion annually.

What are the symptoms of allergic rhinitis?

Signs of allergic rhinitis are similar to signs of a common cold. But, unlike symptoms for the common cold, allergic rhinitis can last for more than 8-10 days. Symptoms include:

- stuffy or runny nose
- sneezing
- itchy or watery nose
- itchy or watery eyes
- coughing (caused by clear mucus running down the back of the throat)
- feeling of a 'permanent cold' that never goes away
- headaches and earache
- constant sore throats and postnasal drip
- sleep disturbances and snoring
- loss of taste and smell

-poor concentration

Children who have allergic rhinitis might have dark circles under their eyes known as "Allergic shiners" (related to nasal congestion). They may also use either the palm or the back of their hand to push their nose up as they try to stop the itching (called the "allergic salute").

What causes allergic rhinitis?

Like our previous discussion, allergic rhinitis is caused by substances that trigger allergies, called allergens. These allergens are found both indoors and outdoors. When allergic rhinitis is caused by common outdoor allergens, like mold or trees, grass and weed pollens, it is often referred to as seasonal allergies, or "hay fever."

Allergic rhinitis may also be triggered by allergens found in your house like animal dander (tiny skin flakes and saliva), indoor mold, and cockroach or house dust mite droppings.

If you experience symptoms during spring, you may be allergic to tree pollens which we will discuss in detail further on.

To know for certain what causes your symptoms, an allergist or immunologist can perform skin tests to determine what you are allergic to.

What are my choices or treatment?

Over-the-counter antihistamines and nose sprays can help at first, but they can have a number of unpleasant side effects. These antihistamines can make you feel tired and drowsy while nasal sprays can make your stuffiness worse.

Doctor-prescribed nose sprays and antihistamines are different types of medication and are very helpful for controlling long-term symptoms. Some are safe for young children and all are safe for adults.

Consultation with an allergist will determine the medicine and treatment that is right for you.

Can I do anything to avoid getting allergic rhinitis?

As prevention is worth a pound of cure, there are some things you can do in your house that might make your symptoms better if not avoid them altogether:

For those who have rhinitis, it may be best not to have pets. But if it cannot be helped, make sure to wash your pet (especially if hairy and furry) once a week. Keeping them out of the bedroom and off the furniture will help as well.

Put pillows and mattresses in sealed plastic covers that keep out dust mites, and wash sheets in hot water weekly. Washing machines at the local Laundromat will have hot enough water to kill the dust mites.

Keep windows closed. If possible, get an air conditioner and run a dehumidifier, so that there will not be so many pollens and molds getting in the house.

What are allergy shots?

For some patients, allergy shots, also known as immunotherapy, are very helpful, and safe. Allergy shots help how your body handles allergens by injecting into your body small amounts of the substances causing your allergy. Over the period of the therapy, your body will learn to accept the allergen without overreacting to it (which is the reason for the allergic reactions).

Your doctor may talk to you about allergy shots if your allergy symptoms are very bad and if they happen for most of the year. You can also consider this if you are constantly around the allergens (such as pollens and dust mites) and if in spite medicines, you are still symptomatic.

### **The Truth about Allergies and Vocal Cord Dysfunction**

Vocal Cord Dysfunction or VCD is a disease on the rise. Since the early 1980s, VCD was then characterized as the "adduction" of the vocal cords manifested with an "open glottic chink."

Vocal cord dysfunction has long been confused with asthma. In fact, there was a medical textbook in 1842 that recognized vocal cord dysfunction as

representing asthma. From then on, there had been too many associations that were made with vocal cord dysfunction to other diseases, which in most cases are all connected to allergies.

Today, vocal cord dysfunction is a well-recognized disease, in which health experts continue to differentiate vocal cord dysfunction with allergic respiratory diseases.

Basically, the concept of VCD is based on the actual and natural process of the vocal cords. Normally, when people breathe or when they inhale, their vocal cords open to let the air pass through and reach the lungs. In the event that the vocal cords lock together, which tighten the airways producing a difficulty in breathing; it can be diagnosed as vocal cord dysfunction.

In diagnosing VCD, an irregular, paradoxical, or inconsistent vocal cord motion can be seen using a "laryngoscope." This process is known as laryngoscopy. This is the most important examination in order to confirm the presence of VCD. Why is that? The reason is because most of the signs and symptoms of VCD are usually associated with those of asthma attacks. That is why most people conclude that VCD is also caused by some allergies.

Moreover, when a person who has asthma and who also has VCD, chances are the diagnosis will only be based on the pertinent results which were based from the symptoms of asthma. What happens in the end is that the vocal cord dysfunction is often misdiagnosed and untreated.

The symptoms of VCD are unexpected start of complexity in talking and inhalation, high-pitched sound, and panic. There also known cases of wheezing, however, it should be noted that in VCD, it occurs when a person breathes in, while in asthma, it occurs when he breathes out.

In reality, VCD is classified as non-allergic respiratory disorders. This means that the main triggering factors of VCD are not based on allergies. In fact, the main description of VCD is that it is an episodic disease, meaning it occurs at irregular intervals, or a certain event triggers the onset of the attack.

In this manner, VCD is triggered by some conditions like asthma attacks but it does not necessarily mean it is caused by the same allergens that initiated asthma.

People should also not be confused with the fact that most people who have asthma are also susceptible to vocal cord dysfunction. In fact, there had been studies wherein 95 patients who have vocal cord dysfunction, 53 were found to have asthma. But this should not initiate the conclusion that vocal cord dysfunction is related to allergies like asthma.

Consequently, people who have both asthma and vocal cord dysfunction are only being treated for their asthma, and not for their VCD. Because of this the VCD gets worse and the person continues to think that he still has asthma.

Moreover, most of the medications used to treat asthma are not effective in treating VCD. Actually, there are cases wherein medications for asthma sometimes cause VCD attacks. This is because there are substances in the medications used in asthma attacks that graven the situation of VCD in a person.

These things are important and should be clearly understood because many VCD cases are not treated at once because of the belief that the attacks are described as an asthma attack.

Hence, through laryngoscopy, VCD can be clearly diagnosed apart from those that are related to asthma or any allergic respiratory disorders. And when the disease is already diagnosed, the treatment should be cured through speech therapy and psychotherapy.

Indeed, certain diseases like VCD should be clearly diagnosed first and not just linked with other disease with the same symptoms. This will only worsen the situation, or it may even cause serious complications and even death, if everything will be taken for granted.

That is why it is extremely important to have a complete and correct diagnosis of the disease.

### **What are seasonal allergies?**

Seasonal allergies are one type of allergic rhinitis. If you recall our chapter on allergic rhinitis you know that it is a type of allergy where breathing in an allergen becomes the source of an inflammatory reaction in the membranes of the nose. With this seasonal allergy, inflammation happens only during a particular period. This is most likely caused by molds, pollens, or other substances that are in the air during specific seasons.

If one becomes afflicted with allergies only during definite seasons of the year, or if they become aggravated during those times, you might be suffering seasonal allergies.

#### Common Allergens

A wide array of substances can pose the risk of becoming respiratory allergens. It would be hard to discover the specific allergen that produces one's symptoms. Common cursors for seasonal allergies are fungus or mold and pollen.

#### Pollen

Pollen grains are common causes triggering seasonal allergic episodes. Pollen from ragweed is the more usual allergens responsible for almost 3/4 (or 75%) of such allergy cases. However, pollen from any grass or tree can trigger allergic symptoms.

Pollen sources and counts in each area change with location, general weather conditions, and the kind of plants present. For example, in Northern America, pollen allergies generally follow this schedule of early

to mid-spring for tree pollen; somewhere late in spring towards early on in summer, grass pollen abound; while the season for weed pollen falls around autumn.

### Molds

Small bits of molds and their spores bear allergens that are hard to avoid since they are present anywhere.

Most molds grow on decomposing plant matter but may also be present on living plants. Reaping ones harvests and disturbing the soil releases molds. Varieties of molds free spores whether the air is dry or has moist.

Common seasonal allergy symptoms include:

- Bouts of sneezing
- Itchy nose
- Watery eyes
- Itchy palate and throat
- Nasal congestion
- Runny nose
- Ear popping and fullness
- Sensations of pressure on cheeks and forehead

### Avoiding Allergen Exposure

Learning how to avoid exposure to specific allergens goes a long way in bringing comfort and relief from allergy symptoms. It also reduces the

symptoms and improves tolerance to unavoidable allergens carried in the air.

If you know which substances are causing your allergies, there are measures you can take to reduce exposure. As pollen and mold are the most common seasonal allergens, you should know how to minimize contact with these.

#### Avoiding Pollen

Generally, pollen counts are highest during early morning hours (5 to 10 am.). Wearing a dust mask during lawn and garden work will help.

Planning outdoor activities like camping around seasons with high pollen count will also help.

Taking frequent showers or baths to remove pollen from hair and skin reduces pollen exposure after activities outdoors. Showering before bed will also help keep contaminants out of your bedding.

Keeping windows and doors closed reduces indoor exposure to pollen. Circulating air with window or attic fans is not recommended since it will increase indoor pollen levels. Installing air conditioning in the house and car may relieve seasonal allergy symptoms.

Avoid hanging items out to dry, as pollen can cling to these, which may be brought into your home.

## Avoiding Mold

Working on a farm or just in the garden will bring you in contact with molds, while activities such as mowing, threshing, or working with compost causes the highest mold levels.

Sensitive persons should wear facemasks that are tight enough to limit air infiltration around the edges. As with pollen, it is helpful to stay inside when mold count is high, such as when the lawn is freshly mown.

Molds also grow indoors and are found in carpeting, bedding, and upholstered furniture. Basements and bathrooms are common mold areas, but they can also be found in houseplants and in anything that is stored, but has some level of humidity.

You can prevent mold growth by eliminating its conditions. Look out for damp areas, like drains, crawl spaces, or basements, and keep them clean and dry. Disinfecting these areas with diluted bleach helps.

Also, regularly steam or dry clean rugs, upholstery, and beddings, either by yourself or by a professional.

## Treatments

Due to developments in recent years, it is now possible for most people to get relief from their seasonal allergy symptoms by using prescription and/or over-the-counter medications.

But before trying any of these treatments, consult with your doctor to get an accurate diagnosis of your condition. If prescription medication therapy is appropriate for your condition, make sure your doctor is aware of all the other drugs and supplements you are taking.

The major categories of allergy treatments include antihistamines, decongestants, anti-inflammatory medications and anticholinergics. Your doctor may suggest that you use one or a combination of these, depending on your symptoms and its severity.

As you learn more about your own seasonal allergic symptoms, the more you will be better able to avoid the causes and go for more effective treatments.

### **Snagging the Villains: Some Known Contributors to Allergies**

The first step in preventing contact with an individual's allergens, the substances to which the person is allergic, is to figure out what they are.

According to some experts, there are times that common sense will tell a person what is causing his or her allergies. This is because there are instances wherein a patient will say that whenever he is around a cat or he touches a cat, sneezing occurs, his eyes itch and water, or he develops asthma, or he gets hives.

Alternatively, there are people who will tell their doctor that whenever they eat anything with soy in it, she gets an immediate reaction. Usually, within 30 minutes she is having stomach upset and diarrhea. So, sometimes a person just knows his allergy.

On the other hand, maybe people do not really know the cause. For example, inside a house, there may be feathers, pets, and house dust, and a person could be allergic to any one of those or to all three. That is when an allergy test can yield a lot of useful information.

Basically, an allergy is an intense reaction of the body to a matter, more commonly known as allergen, which acts as invader. To recognize and capture these villains, the immune system first assembles a vigilante committee of antibodies that gang up on the invaders. Then it gathers a mob of inflammatory substances (like histamines) that try to do away with the evil intruders.

If a person is having persistent allergic symptoms, but he cannot isolate the allergen, it is a good idea to see an allergist, get tested, and find out what allergens are.

If you get a skin test, a tiny bit of allergen is put on a person's skin, and the doctor sees whether there is a reaction or none. On the other hand, an individual can also get a blood test called the Radioallergosorbent test or RAST. This test is less sensitive, but on the other hand, people do not have to put up with the skin reaction that they get from the skin test.

Consequently, once they have the results of the test, they can plan a well-targeted strategy for prevention. Better yet, people should be more knowledgeable on the things that contribute to allergies. This is one effective way of snagging the villains.

Hence, to know more on the common contributors to allergies, here is a list of the villains that trigger a person's allergy attack.

#### 1. Airborne substances

One of the most common contributors to a person's allergies is the airborne substances. These are substances that are carried through the air.

Dust mites are one of the most well recognized sources of allergies. These microscopic, spider-like animals are so plentiful that the population in one gram of dust, about 1/33 of an ounce, can be in the thousands. In addition, many people are allergic to them.

Dust mites like to hang out in bedding, carpeting, and upholstered furniture, feasting on leftover skin scales shed by people. There, they chow down and defecate.

Mold is another popular airborne contributor of allergies. Wherever it is found, in the refrigerator, foyer, bathroom cracks, etc., mold launches tiny reproductive spores that dance on the air right into your nostrils. In addition, those spores can cause an allergic reaction in many people.

## 2. Food allergens

These foods have substances that trigger an allergy attack in a person like eggs, milk, fish, shrimps, etc. However, there are some instances wherein people are often confused with food allergies and food intolerance. That is why it is important to determine the difference between the two.

## 3. Others

There are also other matters that trigger an allergy attack like medications, insect stings and bites, chemicals, etc.

All of these things should be noted well by people who have allergic reactions to any of these substances so that they will know when to avoid it and they will not find it hard to find an immediate remedy to the allergy.

In any case, knowing once and for all whether a person has an allergy or not, and what causes the allergy is the first step toward prevention. As they, prevention is better than cure.

**Food Allergies: Discover the Culprits,  
Prevent the Symptoms**

In today's modern world, more than one-fourth of all adult Americans are convinced that some of the foods they bite into wind up biting them back with recurrent symptoms such as hives, skin rashes, diarrhea, and vomiting. In fact, these are the most common telltale signs of allergies.

So, people who have food allergies make drastic changes in their diets. Aside from the inconvenience of avoiding foods that everyone else seems to enjoy with impunity, staying away from an otherwise nourishing food, such as milk or wheat, can deprive you of key vitamins or minerals.

However, there are instances that what people think are some kinds of allergies are in fact not allergies but food intolerance.

According to most health experts, true food allergies are quite rare, probably affecting less than 2% of the adult population. There are some individuals who think that they have a food allergy wherein fact it is a food intolerance.

The problem with food intolerances is that they also produce some of the same uncomfortable symptoms that food allergies create, including bloating, cramping, gas, and diarrhea.

Therefore, it is important that the person knows if what he is experiencing are true food allergies. In addition, if a person has a bona fide food allergy, he must learn how to avoid the culprit. Here is a list of the

common culprits that cause food allergies in humans. These foods account for almost 90% of all food allergies.

#### 1. People should shell out for peanuts

As a legume, the peanut can be a healthy addition to most diets. But it is among the most allergenic of all foods. In people with severe allergies, just a fraction of a peanut kernel can be enough to set off a reaction. This also means avoid peanut butter!

#### 2. Leave tree nuts alone

Walnuts and other tree nuts, like Brazil nuts, almonds, cashews, pistachios, filberts, pecans etc., are among the most allergenic foods. If a person is allergic to one true nut variety, there is chance that he is also allergic to others, but not necessarily to peanuts, which are legumes.

#### 2. Be a crab about shellfish

Although shrimp gets much attention as an allergen, a broad class of shellfish can cause an allergic reaction. This class includes other crustacean like lobsters, crabs, and prawns, and mollusks such as snails, mussels, oysters, scallops, clams, squid, and octopus.

#### 3. Throw back the finfish

Compared with other major food allergens, the proteins in fish are more vulnerable to heat and other forms of preparation. Therefore, some people allergic to fresh cooked fish can eat the canned version without difficulty.

There are instances that a person might be able to eat canned tuna, but have a problem with fresh grilled tuna, but he does not count on it. Hence, in people with extreme severe fish allergies, even inhaling the vapors from cooking fish can set off a reaction.

Alternatively, reactions to toxins in fish are sometimes mistaken for fish allergies. Scombrotoxic poisoning from fish occurs when fish are contaminated with high levels of histamine, the primary irritant in classic allergic reactions.

#### 4. Bypass milk

Most adverse reactions to milk are not allergies but rather lactose intolerance. That is, insufficient amounts of the digestive enzyme lactase lead to cramping, bloating, and other abdominal symptoms.

Most individuals with lactose intolerance can generally manage small amounts of milk. However, in people with true milk allergy, any consumption of milk or milk-related proteins can be dangerous.

#### 5. Review tofu

Tofu is made from soy, a major allergen in children. Some adults react, too.

#### 6. Beat the wheat

If people notice that wheat products cause symptoms of an allergy, it is quite possible that the person is allergic to the grain. However, it is still

better for a person to be sure and see a doctor. Some people have celiac disease, a rare condition resulting from intolerance to gluten, which is present not only in wheat but also in rye, barley, and oats.

Therefore, it is important to take note of these common food allergies because one might never know that he or she is already allergic to one of these foods.

The bottom line is that people allergic to certain foods should avoid that food for life. In adults, it is simply not reliable for a person to stop eating a food and hope that his allergy will not come back. Once a person is allergic to a food, it is safest to assume that you are allergic to that food for the rest of your life.

### **Diagnosing Allergies**

Checking if you have an allergy properly begins with a consultation with your doctor that deals with the symptoms you are having.

Which doctor?

You will most likely first consult your family doctor or a primary care practitioner. Then, you may be recommended to a special doctor:

An allergist – is one whose specialty is allergies.

A dermatologist - whose expertise is skin problems.

An EENT (eyes, ear, nose and throat) specialist - who knows most about these body areas.

An immunologist - specializes in diseases and disorders in the immune system.

What happens when you go to a medical specialist?

The doctor might first do an allergy screening, asking you relevant questions and conducting a physical exam. Afterwards, your doctor would most likely administer allergy tests to assess your body's sensitivity to some allergens.

After your appointment, the doctor might recommend you start an allergy diary. This allergy diary will help you in keeping track of the symptoms you are suffering and when they occur.

Once the specific allergen triggers have been identified, the doctor would be able determine what tests and treatment should be done to you.

Allergy screening and allergy diagnosis

Your doctor could know what allergies you have as well as allergens that cause these allergies by conducting tests. Tests used for allergy screening

are steps that include taking the clinical history of the symptoms that you have, undertaking a comprehensive physical exam, and probably making you start that allergy diary we recommended above.

### Clinical History

On your initial visit, the doctor will ask you questions pertaining to the clinical history of your symptoms in order to narrow down your possibilities on the wide array of allergens. The doctor would most likely ask you several questions about these symptoms. These may include:

### Basic symptom assessment

- What symptoms do you have - wheezing, itching, sneezing, stomach problems, watery eyes, gas, among others?
- How often and how severe do you have these symptoms?
- Do you know if these symptoms are worse at some point of the day?
- How long do these symptoms occur?

### Symptom Triggers

- Do you know if there is a specific trigger for your symptoms?
- If you know, did you try avoiding such triggers? And how well did this avoidance work?

### Family History

- Do you have any co-family members suffering from allergies?
- Do you have other health problems running in the family?

#### Environment

- Do you reside in a house that has a climate that is damp or there is no proper ventilation for the house to have mold?
- Do you spend time working or staying outdoors?
- What types of plant exist in the areas where you usually go?
- What type of environment are you working in?

#### Medication and food

- What is your usual food diet?
- What medications or drugs are you at present taking on and what drugs do you have infrequently?
- Are you at present using oral and topical corticosteroids, antihistamines, or adrenalin autoinjectors to cure your symptoms?

#### Health History

- Do you have other problems in your health?
- What other health problems do you have before?
- How did you treat allergy symptoms previously? Did you use over-the-counter remedies, prescribed medication or just try to avoid the problem?
- How did your treatment go?

You might want ready answers for these questions when you consult your doctor. If it is possible, come up with answers that are written to these types of questions. This would make diagnosis as easy and quick as possible.

#### Physical Exam

Then, your doctor might perform a comprehensive physical exam for him or her to determine other probable causes for your allergy. He or she may also ask you for some diagnostic tests such as:

- Blood tests
- Tests for pulmonary function
- Lung x-rays
- Cultures detecting infection

Allergy tests could also be done to fully assess your problem. These include:

- Skin tests. If the doctor thinks that your allergies are caused by allergens that are airborne, or from contact, he or she might perform a skin test. This kind of test is cheaper and generally is more accurate than having blood tests to evaluate your allergies.
- Blood tests. Also known as the RAST Test, the doctor will take a minute amount of your blood and check it in a testing lab.
- Food challenge or elimination tests. These tests identify if you are suffering from food allergies. The most frequent allergens are found in wheat, eggs, milk, soy, and nuts (particularly peanuts).

## **What treatments are available for different types of allergies?**

Allergies affect almost everyone since almost anything can trigger an allergic reaction. These reactions are caused by the immune system over-reacting to an allergen or the substance that causes the allergy. These reactions range from violent sneezing to itchy hives or in a more serious form, breathing difficulties.

To address these reactions, the first line of defense is avoiding allergens that cause these allergic symptoms. Minimizing your exposure to allergens will translate less episodes of sneezing, coughing and itching.

But since avoidance isn't possible at all times, your doctor can prescribe allergy medications and treatments, the correct kind and combination of which depends on the kind of symptoms you exhibit. Allergy medications come in pill, liquid, spray, eye drop and topical forms. Some can be bought over-the-counter while others require prescriptions.

Always remember though that in taking medications whether OTC (over-the-counter) doctor-prescribed, consult with your doctor and inform him/her of your medical history before starting any allergy treatments.

Antihistamines

Histamines are chemicals released by the immune system as part of the reaction to an allergen. This substance is responsible for the inflammation or swelling of nasal passage, the skin or any other part affected by an allergy. As the name suggests, antihistamines prevent histamines to cause such reactions reducing redness, swelling, hives and watery eyes. They are prescribed in the form of liquids, sprays, pills and drops.

#### Corticosteroids

With the exception of some OTC creams, corticosteroids require a doctor's prescription. Forms of corticosteroids include:

- Eye drops relieve symptomatic itching and redness of the eyes due to hay fever. Contra-indications include eye infections, glaucoma, and pregnancy. So if any of these apply to you, avoid using corticosteroid eye drops. Contact lens users are also more susceptible to eye infections when using these eye drops.

#### -Nasal sprays

Since it is administered directly to the affected area, nasal sprays are the preferred treatment for hay fever or allergic rhinitis to relieve stuffiness, runny nose and sneezing. However, relief may take time to set in and in some cases, only after regular use. Some of the side effects are an unpleasant taste, irritation that may cause nose bleeding especially during the winter months.

- Creams that come in varying strengths of dosages are good for itching and scaling skin. However, be cautious of continued use as they can sometimes cause skin irritation.

- Oral corticosteroids are prescribed for short periods to address more acute forms of allergic symptoms. But the long-term use of such has been known to cause side effects like cataracts and osteoporosis so prescription is regulated.

#### Leukotriene modifiers

These medicines work similarly to antihistamines in that they block the substances released by your immune system to aggravate allergic reactions. Leukotriene modifiers have been proven to treating allergic asthma and rhinitis.

#### Injectible epinephrine

Anaphylactic shock is a violent allergic reaction that affects key body functions such as the respiratory and cardiovascular system. This kind of reaction is similar to throwing a monkey wrench into a machine that puts the system in jeopardy. The danger of that kind of reaction is therefore very high.

If you've been diagnosed as very likely to exhibit violent allergic reactions to substances like bee stings or crustaceans (crabs, shrimps), you run the risk of going into anaphylactic shock. To be safe, your doctor may recommend that you carry with you at all times an injection of epinephrine.

Epinephrine is a powerful drug that slows down an allergic reaction while emergency medical treatment is being sought out to attend to you. Your doctor should be able to tell you how to use the self-injecting syringe and needle. It will also do you good to teach others as well in cases of emergency.

### Immunotherapy

If your condition doesn't see improvement in spite of medications or if taking them will incur adverse side effects, your doctor may recommend immunotherapy, which is the process of training your immune system not to react to substances that used to cause allergies for you. This can take as long as three to five years to finish. It is done by introducing extracts of the allergen into your body through a series of regulated injections. The goal is to make your body desensitized to the substance, which will eliminating or decrease your need to take medicines.

This method is especially effective for people allergic to substances that are found everywhere and cannot be avoided (such as dust and pollen). The procedure is also helpful in arresting the development of asthma in children.

There are about as many allergy medications as there are allergies themselves. By knowing and understanding how these medications work and with your doctor's advice, you develop a treatment plan that works best for you.

## **Natural Remedies**

A lot of people nowadays turn to a holistic health lifestyle and rally for natural remedies like homeopathy or herbs to recover from certain illnesses. Natural remedies or alternative medicine encompasses a number of non-traditional ways for a healthier lifestyle.

Some of these natural remedies are:

### 1. Apitherapy

Apitherapy is one of the natural remedies which makes use of bee products to help someone recover from a certain illness or condition. There are about 500 diseases that Apitherapy can heal.

### 2. Applied Kinesiology

Applied kinesiology can pinpoint body dysfunctions by identifying weak muscles.

### 3. Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is the science of using essential plant oils for the betterment of one's well-being.

The most common carrier oils are: sweet almond, olive, avocado, borage, apricot kernel, cocoa butter, sunflower, evening primrose, peanut, grape seed, hazelnut, sesame, jojoba, kukui, macadamia nut, pecan, rose hip, and shea butter.

#### 4. Ayurveda

Considered the oldest health care system in the world that originated from India, Ayurveda stems from three biological principles: Vata which is the regulation of movement, Pitta for regulation of metabolism and Kapha for structure.

#### 5. Biofeedback

Biofeedback is one of the natural remedies that use the body's signals for the improvement of health.

#### 6. Bodywork

Bodywork employs deep tissue massage, balance of energy and movement awareness to improve one's health. It does not necessarily involve body touch but it takes care of the body's healing response.

#### 7. Buteyko

One of the natural remedies to watch out for is buteyko which involves breathing exercises to help asthmatic people.

## 8. Chinese Medicine

Chinese medicine has always been known as one of the most popular natural remedies. Chinese Medicine is rooted from the Taoist belief – the law of Yin and Yang. The person will experience less illness if the Yin and Yang is well-balanced.

Chinese medicine is famous for its herbs like the Ren Shen, Dang Gui, Dan Shen, Mu Li, Du Huo and Fang Feng.

One cannot talk about Chinese medicine without mentioning acupuncture. Acupuncture is able to diagnose the illness by the flow of Qi (energy).

## 9. Color Therapy

Color Therapy uses the spectrum to enhance the energy center or Chakra of the body and also improve the body's healing process.

## 10. Flower Essences

Dr. Edward Bach discovered in 1930 that flowers contain energy that can put human discord to an equilibrium.

## 11. Gemstone Therapy

There is such a thing as a healing gemstone that can alleviate ill body conditions. A gemologist must be consulted as "synthetic gems" are useless.

## 12. Herbology

Natural remedies are immediately associated with herbs. Herbs are classified into aromatic, astringent, bitter, mucilaginous and nutritive. Proven to improve health, herbs are great sources of vitamins and minerals. Vitamin A can be found in alfalfa, saw palmetto and dock, whereas bee pollen, juniper berry and peppermint are rich in Vitamin C. For one's calcium fix, there's aloe vera and fennel seed.

## 13. Homeopathy

Homeopathy involves the use of active ingredients in small doses together with natural substances for a healthier balance.

## 15. Iridology

Iridology is diagnosing through the irises, as they are human parts that show signs of physical and mental illnesses.

## 16. Macrobiotics

Macrobiotics is achieving over-all wellness by changing one's lifestyle, diet and attitude. It comes from the words macro which means great, and bios which means life.

#### 17. Meditation

What can be more natural than just looking for a quiet spot and muse deeply on series of subjects that will eventually lead to enlightenment? Stress is dramatically reduced and the body is recharged by deeply meditating.

#### 18. Music Therapy

Music is language of the soul, so it is not surprising that there is such a thing as music therapy. So far, music therapy has incurred differences and benefits to people who practiced it. This is a fortified healthcare profession that is designed to do the following: promote well-being, express emotions, manage and combat stress, improve memory and alleviate aches and pains.

#### 19. Naturopathy

Naturopathic medicine's principles are based on the belief that natural balances make up for a well-balanced internal chemistry.

With those effective natural remedies, it is no wonder a lot of people have started employing each one of them in times of sickness. Most go for natural remedies just to maintain their healthy bodies.

### **Avoiding Allergic Reactions**

Most allergens attack and trigger allergic reaction if they find themselves on the skin or inside the eye. Allergic reactions can happen through inhalation, ingestion or injection and, as discussed previously, allergies can be seasonal as with the case of the hay fever or it can be drug or dust-induced and food-related.

The production of an antibody called immunoglobulin happens upon the first exposure to an allergen. This immunoglobulin or (IgE) attaches itself to basophiles, a type of white blood cell and mast cells. The initial exposure may have a person extra-sensitive to allergen but the symptoms may not be there. Subsequent exposures can eventually lead to more reactions and tissue irritations. Reactions can be mild or severe.

Avoiding an allergy simply translates to one commonsense fact: avoid the allergen. This means the person has to discontinue using a drug, have the dust removed, put the pet outdoors, install effective air filters and simply avoid eating a particular food. If the allergy is severe, the person may consider moving out and finding a place that does not contain the allergen.

Here are more ways to prevent an allergic reaction:

1. Ask the doctor for an allergy kit.

An allergy kit is used for severe allergic reactions, also called anaphylaxis.

The kit must have the following: how-to's on using the kit, sterilized cotton swabs for cleansing the skin before and after the injection, Epinephrine which comes in a syringe and some Antihistamine tablets.

Remember that the medications inside an allergy kit may lose their efficacy if exposed to direct sunlight or high temperature. The patient must watch out for the color of Epinephrine. It must be clear. Once it turns pinkish brown, it must be thrown away.

2. You must wear a medical ID tag if you are susceptible to serious reaction so other people are alerted your allergy.

3. There must be a thorough discussion on allergy shots or immunotherapy with the doctor.

Allergy shots can reduce or totally ward off one's sensitivity to an allergen.

These shots are for the following allergies:

1. Pollen (trees, grasses and even ragweed)
2. Dust motes and cockroaches.

3. Dander from dogs and cats

4. Fungus

5. Insect venom (from bees, hornets, wasps, yellow jackets and fire ants)

6. Medications

As children are more susceptible to allergic reactions, the parent must exert extra effort to keep any allergic reaction at bay. Schools are often considered breeding ground for allergens so the parent and school administrators must work hand in hand. The home must also be allergen-proof so the children can go about freely.

Allergic reactions are dangerous and fatal, if left untreated or if the person is more susceptible than usual. It is mandatory that preventive measures must be carried out to avoid the severe symptoms. For more information on allergic reactions, one must ask the family doctor.

Properly diagnosed and treated, allergies need not affect your life in any significant manner.