



## Find an Allergist. Find *Relief* From Your Allergies and Allergic Conditions

### What are allergies?

As many as 50 million people in the United States have allergies. Allergies occur when your immune system reacts to an allergen – a usually harmless substance, such as dust, pollen, pet dander, or food – by trying to fight off the substance as if it were a germ. Your body responds with mild symptoms such as sneezing and itching, or more serious ones like hives or shortness of breath. In some people, exposure to an allergen can cause a severe, life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis. Some of the more serious symptoms of anaphylaxis are:

- Trouble breathing
- Hives or swelling
- Tightness of the throat
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness or fainting
- Low blood pressure
- Rapid heartbeat
- Cardiac arrest

### How to know if you have allergies

Do you get a stuffy nose and itchy eyes when spring flowers start to bloom? Do you get hives from petting your friend's dog? Do you get dizzy or feel nauseated when you eat fish? These could all be symptoms of allergic conditions. You may notice that you experience symptoms at certain times of the year, in certain environments, or when you eat certain foods.

An allergist can help you identify your specific allergic triggers and make a plan for managing your symptoms. The most common signs of allergies and allergic conditions are:

- Sneezing
- Wheezing
- Itching, including itchy eyes
- Swelling
- Difficulty swallowing
- Stomach cramps
- Vomiting

## Understanding the causes of allergies and allergic conditions

There are many different types of allergies. Some people are allergic to dust, pet dander, pollen, or mold. Others are allergic to latex, certain drugs, or insect stings.

Food allergies are also common; 4% of adults and 4% – 6% of children in the United States have food allergies. Any food can cause an allergic reaction, but the nine most common food allergens are eggs, milk, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, wheat, soy, and sesame.

## How to treat your allergies

Allergists are specially trained to diagnose and treat your allergies so that you can take back control of your life. An allergist will identify your allergic triggers via allergy testing and work with you on a plan to help you avoid your allergens and manage your symptoms. An allergist may also prescribe medication or allergy immunotherapy (allergy shots and tablets).



Immunotherapy helps to reduce symptoms in about 85% of people who have allergic rhinitis, commonly known as hay fever or seasonal allergy.

If you are at risk for a severe reaction, especially if you have a food allergy, your allergist may prescribe an epinephrine auto-injector. Be sure to carry your auto-injector with you, and always have two doses available. Use your epinephrine auto-injector immediately if you experience a severe reaction – the risks of not using it far outweigh the risks of an unnecessary dose of epinephrine.

Learn more about allergies – and take the first step to finding relief at [acaai.org/find-an-allergist](https://acaai.org/find-an-allergist).

