

Cough

Signs of Allergies

If you have a chronic dry cough (a cough that has lasted for more than three weeks), it may be a symptom of allergies or asthma. Most people have experienced a cough caused by a cold or flu. If your cough is allergy-related, you might notice that you cough more during some seasons, or in some environments. This can be caused by the presence of allergens that may affect you.

You might also have other symptoms of allergy. Hay fever (allergic rhinitis) can cause sneezing, congestion, and itchy skin, eyes and nose, as well as a cough. An allergy cough is caused by your immune system's response to an allergen, rather than by an infection like a flu or cold cough.

Asthma can also cause a cough. If you are also wheezing or have tightness in your chest or shortness of breath, you may have an asthma cough.



Triggers

- Asthma and allergy coughs are typically caused by swelling or irritation of the airways.
- Allergies like hay fever can cause a chronic dry cough. If you're sensitive to dust, pet dander,

pollen, mold, or other common allergens, then your allergy symptoms may include a cough. Allergies can also worsen your asthma symptoms, causing them to become severe.



How to Get Tested

Your board-certified allergist is a specialist in helping patients find relief from symptoms like asthma and allergy cough.

If you're suffering from a chronic cough that might be related to allergy or asthma, it's important to get tested.

Skin testing is the most commonly used form of allergy testing and it is fast and accurate. In certain circumstances, your allergist may conduct blood testing in addition to or instead of skin testing. You may also take a breathing test, which can help in diagnosing asthma.

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Asthma, Wheezing, Shortness of Breath

Signs of Asthma

Wheezing is a whistling or squeaky sound in your chest when you breathe, especially when you exhale. It is one of the telltale signs of asthma. Swelling or narrowing of your throat or the airways to your lungs can cause wheezing. It can also result in shortness of breath, because your lungs can't hold as much air when they are affected by swelling or mucus buildup.



Sometimes children experience wheezing, but it is not always a sign of asthma. A lung infection can create wheezing in children younger than 5. And wheezing and shortness of breath can sometimes be symptoms of a cold in children with a family history of allergies.



Triggers

- Allergic triggers, such as ragweed, pollen, animal dander or dust mites.
- Irritants in the air like smoke, chemical fumes, strong odors or extreme weather conditions can also be triggers.
- Exercise or an illness
- Emotions
- Pregnancy

How to Get Tested

Allergists are specialists in diagnosing and treating asthma and other allergic diseases. And allergists are specially trained to identify the factors that trigger asthma or allergies.

To diagnose asthma and distinguish it from other lung issues, allergists rely on the combination of a medical history and a thorough physical examination, including certain tests.

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Eye Allergy

Overview

If your eyes itch and are red, tearing or burning, you may have eye allergies (allergic conjunctivitis), a condition that affects millions of Americans. Many people will treat their nasal allergy symptoms but ignore their itchy, red, watery eyes.

Symptoms can occur independently but usually accompany the sneezing, sniffing or stuffy nose related to nasal allergies.



Triggers

- Outdoor allergens, such as pollens from grass, trees and weeds
- Indoor allergens, such as pet dander, dust mites and mold
- Irritants, such as cigarette smoke, perfume and diesel exhaust



Management and Treatment

- Allergen avoidance
- OTC (over-the counter) eyedrops and medications
- Prescription eyedrops and medications
- Children can be treated with both OTC and prescription eyedrops and medications. Artificial tears are safe and can be used at any age. Some eyedrops, such as antihistamines and mast cell stabilizers, can be used in children 3 and older. Any treatment should be discussed with your child's physician.

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Chronic Hives

Overview

Hives, also known as urticaria, affect about 20% of people at some time during their lives. It can be triggered by many substances or situations and usually starts as an itchy patch of skin that turns into swollen red welts.

Chronic hive symptoms are generally the same as “short-lived” hive symptoms but appear at least twice a week and last more than six weeks.

Rarely, cases of hives last more than six weeks and can last months or up to 5 years. This condition is known as chronic spontaneous/idiopathic urticaria (ongoing, of unknown cause).



Symptoms

- Raised itchy bumps, either red or skin-colored
- “Blanching” (when pressed, the center of a red hive turns white)



Management and Treatment

Chronic hives should be evaluated by an allergist.

Medications or other treatments such as sedating antihistamines, anti-inflammatory agents, and sulfones may be attempted.

Prednisone, an oral steroid, but has long-term side effects, making it undesirable for chronic use. Steroids should be avoided whenever possible.

Non-steroid drugs with anti-inflammatory properties. Because many of these medications are by prescription only and can have side effects, they should be prescribed by an allergist or dermatologist with experience in treating chronic hives.

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Drug Allergy

Overview

As with other allergic reactions, these symptoms can occur when your body's immune system becomes sensitized to a substance in the medication, perceives it as a foreign invader and releases chemicals to defend against it.

People with drug allergies may experience symptoms regardless of whether their medicine comes in liquid, pill or injectable form. If you feel confused about your symptoms and which medications are safe for you to take then it's time to take control and see an [allergist](#).



Symptoms

- Skin rash or hives
- Itching
- Wheezing or other breathing problems
- Swelling
- Anaphylaxis is a potentially life-threatening reaction that can

simultaneously affect two or more organ systems (for example, when there is both a rash and difficulty breathing)



Triggers

- Penicillin and related antibiotics
- Antibiotics containing sulfonamides (sulfa drugs)
- Anticonvulsants
- Aspirin, ibuprofen and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
- Chemotherapy drugs

Management and Treatment

If you have a drug allergy:

- Make sure all your doctors are aware of your allergy and the symptoms you experienced.
- Ask about related drugs that you should avoid.
- Ask about alternatives to the drug that caused your allergic reaction.
- Wear an emergency medical alert bracelet or necklace that identifies your allergy.

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Allergic Rhinitis

Overview

Allergic rhinitis – commonly known as hay fever – is a group of symptoms affecting the nose. But don't be misled by the name – you don't have to be exposed to hay to have symptoms. And hay fever doesn't cause a fever.

- **Seasonal:** Symptoms of seasonal allergic rhinitis can occur in spring, summer, and early fall. They are usually caused by allergic sensitivity to airborne mold spores or to pollens from trees, grass, and weeds.
- **Perennial:** People with perennial allergic rhinitis experience symptoms year-round. It is generally caused by dust mites, pet hair or dander, cockroaches, or mold. Underlying or hidden food allergies rarely cause perennial nasal symptoms.

Some people may experience both types of rhinitis, with perennial symptoms getting worse during specific pollen seasons. There are also nonallergic causes for rhinitis including irritants such as cigarette or other smoke, perfumes, cleaning products and other strong odors.



Symptoms

- Runny nose
- Itchy eyes, mouth or skin
- Sneezing
- Stuffy nose due to blockage or congestion
- Fatigue (often reported due to poor quality sleep as a result of nasal obstruction)



Management and Treatment

- Avoidance of Outdoor or Indoor Exposures and Exposure to pets
- Medications:
 - Intranasal Corticosteroids
 - Antihistamines
 - Decongestants
 - Nasal Sprays
 - Leukatriene pathway inhibitors

Treatments that are **NOT** recommended for allergic rhinitis

- Antibiotics
- Nasal surgery

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Anaphylaxis

Overview

Allergies to food, insect stings, medications and latex are most frequently associated with anaphylaxis. This severe reaction happens when an over-release of chemicals puts the person into shock. If you have had an allergic reaction in the past, you are at risk of future reactions. Call 911 and get to the nearest emergency facility at the first sign of exposure to an allergen./idiopathic urticaria (ongoing, of unknown cause).



Symptoms

- Trouble breathing
- Hives or swelling
- Tightness of the throat
- Hoarse voice
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea
- Low blood pressure

- Rapid heartbeat
- Feeling of doom
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Cardiac arrest

The best way to understand anaphylaxis and the things that can trigger this severe allergic reaction is to see an allergist who will help you manage your condition.



Management and Treatment

An anaphylactic reaction should be treated immediately with an injection of epinephrine (adrenaline). Doses, available by prescription, come in an auto-injector that should be always kept with you. Two injections may be necessary to control symptoms.

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Hives

Overview

If you've had red or skin-colored bumps that appeared and disappeared quickly, then it's unlikely to be simple bug bites. The skin rash could be hives, and the itching from hives may range from mild to severe. Hives, also known as urticaria, affects about 20 percent of people at some time during their lives. Scratching, alcoholic beverages, exercise and emotional stress may worsen the itching.



Symptoms

While they resemble bug bites, hives (also known as urticaria) are different in several ways:

- Hives can appear on any area of the body; they may change shape, move around, disappear and reappear over short periods of time.
- The bumps – red or skin-colored “wheals” with clear edges – usually appear suddenly and go away just as quickly.
- Pressing the center of a red hive makes it turn white – a process called “blanching.”

The best way to identify your symptoms is to talk to an allergist who can diagnose and treat both hives and angioedema.



Management and Treatment

If the cause of hives can be identified, the best treatment is to avoid the trigger or eliminate it:

- **Foods:** Don't eat foods that have been identified to cause your symptoms.
- **Rubbing or scratching:** Avoid harsh soaps. Frequent baths may reduce itching and scratching – beneficial because itching and scratching can make the hives feel worse.
- **Constant pressure:** Avoid tight clothing. Pressure hives can be relieved by wearing loose-fitting clothes.
- **Temperature:** If you develop hives when exposed to cold, do not swim alone in cold water and always carry an epinephrine auto-injector. Avoid exposure to cold air and use a scarf around your nose and mouth in cold weather. If you must be out in the cold, wear warm clothing.
- **Sun exposure:** Wear protective clothing; apply sunblock.
- **Medications:** Notify your physician or pharmacist immediately if you suspect that a specific medication is causing your hives.

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