

# APRIL — ALLERGIES

*"am in pain and distress; may your salvation, O God, protect me." Psalm 69:29 NIV*

Allergies are unusual, irritating, and potentially dangerous reactions of the immune system to a normally harmless substance. These reactions occur in about one out of every three people. They will attack the respiratory tract, digestive tract, or entire body, but the type and severity of the reaction will depend on the individual's level of sensitivity to the offending substance.



There are three categories of allergic reactions. Mild reactions are localized and include a rash, watery or itchy eyes, and congestion. Moderate reactions can spread beyond the original site of irritation and cause severe itching and difficulty breathing. The worst reaction, anaphylaxis, affects the whole body and is rare but life-threatening. Within minutes severe swelling will make breathing and swallowing difficult, and may include abdominal pain, vomiting, and mental confusion. Persons severely allergic to bees, shellfish, or peanuts should carry a dose of epinephrine to quickly reverse this reaction.

Since allergies can't be cured, it is important to determine and avoid the triggers for allergic reactions. Triggers can be environmental (wind, pollen, poison ivy, pollution), chemical (perfume, smoke, cleaning materials, latex rubber, medications), or foods (shellfish, peanuts, wheat, milk, soy, strawberries, eggs). In addition, do not overlook items from the surroundings like animals, mold, bee stings, or dust.

Whether an allergy is diagnosed through the medical testing of a physician or the detective process of an individual, finding the source of the allergy is like solving a mystery. Be observant to symptoms and the activities leading up to them. Look for connections between a reaction and any changes in diet, environment, or product use. Also consider others and eliminate bringing potential triggers into public venues whenever possible. Through process of elimination, irritants can be discovered and reactions prevented.

*(Source: HON approved <http://allergies.about.com>)*