

Employer wellness newsletter



Allergies – Understanding and managing your symptoms

Watery eyes, itchiness, runny nose. Does this sound familiar? If so, you might have allergies.

Allergies happen when your immune system has a bad response to something that's usually harmless — tree pollen, dust, pet hair, or certain foods. The immune system identifies these things as dangerous, setting off an allergic reaction, like sneezing or a rash.

What causes allergies?

Allergies can develop at any age. Family history and the environment, including where you live, can play a role. If both your parents have allergies, you'll probably have allergies, but you may not be allergic to the same things or have the same reactions.



10 common allergy triggers

1. Pollen
2. Mold
3. Food
4. Dust
5. Pet dander
6. Insect bites
7. Medicines
8. Latex
9. Jewelry
10. Perfumes and lotions

Signs and symptoms



Allergy symptoms can range from mild to severe. Some common signs are:

- Breathing problems
- Diarrhea, stomach cramps, or vomiting
- Headache
- Itchy eyes, nose, mouth, throat, or skin
- Runny or stuffy nose, coughing, and sneezing
- Skin rash or hives
- Watery, red, or swollen eyes
- Wheezing

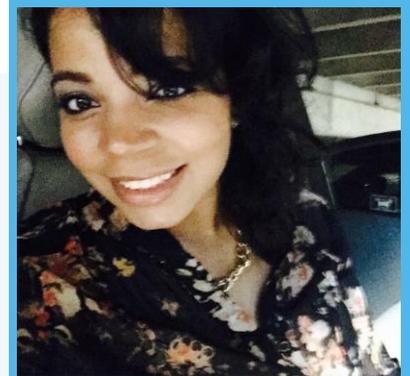


Consultant's corner

Many people welcome the signs of Spring---warmer temperatures, flowers blooming, and trees budding. However, for the 18 million people in the US with allergies and the 10 million people with asthma, these signs of Spring are a red flag of caution. Runny nose, itchy eyes, sore throat, and sneezing are all common symptoms of an allergy attack that can be triggered by environmental factors such as pollen, dust, or animal dander. Allergic reactions can also cause difficulty breathing for people with asthma which could be life-threatening in some cases.

Allergies and asthma may not immediately come to mind when an employer thinks about health conditions that can have an impact on their workforce. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the economic impact of allergies and asthma is close to \$60 billion in medical spend, absenteeism, and lost productivity.

Employers can also play a role in helping to reduce the burden of asthma by reducing allergy triggers in the workplace, offering educational campaigns about respiratory health, and promoting programs that help members manager asthma, like Anthem's Condition Care program. In addition to education, The American Lung Association recommends that employers offer comprehensive medical coverage to help reduce the cost of these conditions. Learn more about the American Lung Association's recommendations [here](#).



Anthem Well-Being Consultant
Lindsay Pryor, CWWPM

A healthy tip for your employees

To find a doctor or allergy specialist near you, use the SydneySM Health mobile app or visit [anthem.com](https://www.anthem.com).



Health and wellness calendar

Anthem's health and wellness calendar helps you engage your employees and keep them informed about health topics and resources.

You can download the [health and wellness](#) calendar today.

UPCOMING VIRGINIA EVENTS

April 22 | Roanoke

Anthem Star 10k

This 10K route will test participants' endurance and strength with equally challenging uphill and downhill race navigation.

Visit [Anthem Star 10K - Foot Levelers Blue Ridge Marathon](#) for more details.

Check with your Anthem representative to see if any of the programs mentioned in this e-newsletter are available to you.

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Health & Wellness Newsletter

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Allergies: Your body's over-reaction to the everyday

We've all seen it happen. A child having a major meltdown for no apparent reason. Well, allergies are a little like that. They're a body's version of a temper tantrum – a physical over-reaction to something that for other people just isn't that bad.

When someone with allergies has contact with a certain something, their immune system goes into high alert. Their body believes it's harmful – whether it really is or not – and surround and attacks it. That's why some folks can be allergic to foods like nuts, seafood or dairy, while others can eat them without a problem.

Allergies are pretty common – one out of every five Americans has at least one. And we often inherit allergies from our parents. Besides food allergies, many people have reactions to pollens, molds, dust, pets, insect stings, even makeup and perfume. Whatever causes the problem is called an "allergen."

When an allergen comes on the scene, your body's immune system sends white blood cells in to take care of business. The blood cells react by producing fighters called "antibodies." Antibodies send in their own warriors in to fight, releasing a substance called "histamine." All this activity is your body's way of getting rid of what it sees as a threat. And that inner battle is what causes an exaggerated physical response. And your misery. Some common allergy symptoms include:

- Coughing, sneezing
- Watery, red, swollen or itchy eyes
- Headache
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Rashes or itchy skin
- Stomach cramps or diarrhea in the case of food allergies

- Swelling and redness in the case of insect bites

A person's allergic reaction can be mild (feeling a bit under the weather) or stronger (feeling seriously ill). Most reactions go away once you get out of range of the problem. But sometimes an allergen can cause a severe, life-threatening response called "anaphylaxis" (an-uh-fil-ax-iss). This needs emergency room care right away. Symptoms can be dangerous or even cause death; they include trouble breathing, low blood pressure and passing out.

If you have other health problems, such as asthma or COPD, allergies can also make it harder to keep them under control.

Luckily, most people can get a handle on their allergies by staying away from triggers, or with shots or medicine. For more on allergies, visit the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology at aaaai.org.



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