



Allergies

Managing and understanding your child's allergy

An allergy is when the body has a reaction to a protein such as foods, insect stings, pollens, house dust mite or other substance such as antibiotics. There are many common allergies.

Allergic symptoms can affect the nose, throat, ears, eyes, airways, digestion and skin in mild, moderate or severe form. When a child first shows signs of an allergy it is not always clear what has caused the symptoms, or even if they have had an allergic reaction, since some allergic symptoms can be similar to other common childhood illnesses. Seek medical advice if your child has, or has had, a severe allergic reaction. Even if symptoms have died down, they could flare up again and even become life-threatening.

Urticaria - also known as hives, or nettle rash can be one of the first symptoms of an allergic reaction. It appears as a raised, itchy rash on just one part of the body or spread across large areas. Your child may have had a reaction to:

- Food, such as nuts, eggs, chocolate, citrus fruits, strawberries, shellfish, a reaction to cow's milk can also happen in babies younger than six months.
- Irritants such as nettles, latex and chemicals.
- Toddlers who have developed an allergy to cats may also break out in hives when stroking a pet.
- Some medicines. • Insect bites and stings.
- Heat. A child can break out in hives if they become overheated.

It may go away in a few hours or days. If hives are particularly itchy or swollen, see your GP.

Source: NICE - Testing for food allergy in children and young people

Anaphylactic shock

Anaphylaxis is a dangerous type of allergic reaction which is most likely to be caused by particular foods, insect bites or medicines.

Early signs of allergic reaction:

- Swelling and itching; the face may be flushed and wheals or hives may erupt on the skin.
- Lip or facial swelling.
- Acute vomiting/abdominal pain.

Anaphylaxis or severe reactions:

- Difficulty breathing, coughing and/or wheezing.
- Loss of colour; cold and clammy.
- Loss of consciousness (may appear asleep).

Call 999 and tell the operator you think the child has anaphylaxis.

If available, an adrenaline injection should be given as soon as a serious reaction is suspected. If you already have an EpiPen or injection device, make sure you know the correct way to use it in advance of an emergency.

Spotting symptoms

This example shows areas where allergy sufferers may experience symptoms. Many of these symptoms can develop as a result of other common childhood illnesses. With an allergy, symptoms often appear more quickly or suddenly.

Eyes

Itchy eyes, watery eyes, prickly eyes, swollen eyes, 'allergic shiners' - dark areas under the eyes due to blocked sinuses.

Antihistamines

Antihistamines are probably the best known type of allergy medication, and most are readily available from a pharmacy without prescription. While antihistamines used to have a reputation for making people drowsy, more modern antihistamines only occasionally have those side effects.

Source: www.allergyuk.org

Nose, throat and ears

Runny nose, blocked nose, itchy nose, sneezing, pain in sinuses, headaches, post-nasal drip (mucus drips down the throat from behind the nose), loss of sense of smell and taste, sore throat, swollen larynx (voice box), itchy mouth and/or throat, blocked ear and glue ear.

Airways

Wheezy breathing, difficulty in breathing, coughing (especially at night time), shortness of breath.

Skin

Urticaria - Wheals or hives, bumpy, itchy raised areas, rashes.

Eczema - Cracked, dry or weepy, broken skin.

Digestion

Swollen lips/tongue, stomach ache, feeling sick, vomiting, constipation, diarrhoea, bleeding from the bottom, reflux, poor growth.

Source: Allergy UK/2014