

## Allergies - Causes & Prevention

Allergies are caused by allergens which contain protein, which is found in all living organisms, and it is this protein which causes allergies. If your body reacts to a substance in an adverse way then you are said to be allergic to that substance.

Four of the most common allergies are; dust mites, nuts, pollen and animal (pet).

An allergic reaction happens when you come in contact with an allergen through your skin, the lining of your lungs, mouth, gullet, stomach or intestines. Allergic reactions can cause a range of symptoms, some mild, some serious and very occasionally fatal.

If the allergen is airborne then the allergic reaction will occur in the eyes, nose & lungs. If the allergen is swallowed, the allergic reaction will occur in the mouth, stomach & intestines. When in contact with an allergen your body produces chemicals (antibodies) to fight off the allergen. Sometimes enough chemicals are released to cause a reaction throughout the body such as hives, decreased blood pressure, shock or loss of consciousness. This severe type of reaction is known as anaphylaxis or anaphylactic shock which may be life threatening.

In the US 20% of adults and children suffer from allergies. In the UK approx 1 in 4 people suffer from allergies at some point in their lives. In Australia there has been a dramatic increase in allergies recently with an estimated 40% now suffering from some form of allergy.

The best & easiest way to prevent allergies is to avoid contact with the allergen - the substance which triggers your allergy. There are many OTC (over the counter) treatment for allergies the most common being:

**Antihistamines;** These treat allergies by blocking the action of the chemical histamine, which is a chemical released by the body when in contact with the allergen. Antihistamines can be taken in pill, cream or liquid form. You can also take eye or nasal drops.

**Decongestants;** Relieve symptoms of allergies such as blocked noses, often caused by hay fever, dust & pet allergies. They can be taken as pills, capsules, liquid form or nasal spray.

**Nasal Sprays & Eye drops;** these help relieve symptoms of allergies such as sore itchy eyes & irritation & swelling of the nose. Some treatments are only suitable for adults so check before purchasing remedies for children.

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### About the Author

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