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SCRATCH 'N SNIFF

Understanding Allergies and How to Treat Them



Dignity Health[™]

A WORKPLACE CONCERN?

- Productivity
- Goodwill
- Safety & Liability
- Bottom Line

PRODUCTIVITY

- Absenteeism
- Presenteeism (on-the-job)
- Increased distraction by peers

Symptomatic employees are **absent** from work an average of **3.6 days** and **off task 2.3 hours a day** when they're at work.

GOODWILL

- Responsibility to advocate for employees
- Overall employee health
- Employee satisfaction

SAFETY & LIABILITY

- Rise in mold lawsuits in US
- Increased on-the-job risk
- Required to accommodate
- ADA & OSHA

BOTTOM LINE

- Loss of productivity
- Increased risk & lawsuits
- More used sick time
- Rising healthcare cost

“Scratch and Sniff” All About Allergies

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What is an allergic reaction?

The immune system identifies things that are foreign and protects your body from them

Allergies are an over-reaction of this system

The various symptoms depend upon where in the body this reaction takes place

Allergic rhinitis (common allergies or hayfever)

Sneezing, congestion, runny nose, itching

No sore throat or fever

Usually does **not** cause cough, trouble breathing, or wheezing

Treatment of allergic rhinitis

Anti-histamines

Nasal steroid sprays

Decongestants

Most medications for allergic rhinitis are available without a prescription

Avoid things you are allergic to

Allergic Conjunctivitis (Eye allergies)

Mild redness of eyes

Watery eyes

Itching of eyes

Does *not* cause problems with your vision

Treatment of Allergic Conjunctivitis

Antihistamine pills are moderately effective

Allergy eye drops work best

Urticaria (Hives)

Raised red bumps that come and go

Does **not** cause scaling of the skin or blisters

Sometimes caused by a true allergy, sometimes not

Allergic: Foods, medications, insect bites, pollen

Other causes: Cold, heat, stress

Can be short-lived or chronic

Cause may be difficult to determine

Treatment of Urticaria (Hives)

Avoid known triggers

Antihistamines

Topical or oral steroids

See your doctor if they last for very long

Food Intolerance

- Happens when the body has difficulty digesting or processing a particular food
- Abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhea can be caused by sensitivity to sugars such as lactose or fructose, or by fiber
- Symptoms are consistent and predictable
- Migraines can be triggered by certain foods
- Some people may be sensitive to gluten
- This is **not** a true allergy

Treatment is avoiding things you are sensitive to

Food Allergies

True reaction of the immune system to a food

Reactions can be triggered by even very small amounts of food

Symptoms are inconsistent and unpredictable

- Itching, hives, swelling of the lips, face, throat, nausea, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, wheezing
- Nuts, fish, shellfish, wheat, soy, eggs, milk
- This **is** a true allergy
- May be a true emergency

Oral Allergy Syndrome (food-pollen allergy)

Proteins in foods are similar to pollens and can cause a local allergy reaction

Symptoms

- Mild itching of mouth, mild swelling of mouth, lips, tongue
- Usually happens quickly after eating the food
- Nuts, berries, melons, peaches are common triggers
- Not usually a true emergency, but seek help immediately if serious
- This **is** a true allergy

Treatment is avoiding triggers, seek emergency help when needed

What you can treat at home

Allergic rhinitis

Allergic conjunctivitis

Brief episode of hives with known trigger

Food intolerance

When to see your doctor

Respiratory symptoms: Unusual, prolonged, or severe symptoms

Fever cough, wheezing, sore throat

Eye symptoms: Trouble with vision

Severe redness

Eye symptoms associated with a cold

Drainage from eyes

Digestive symptoms Severe pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea

Weight loss or fever

Bloody diarrhea

When to go to the Emergency Room

Rapidly progressing symptoms

Trouble breathing

Swelling of throat

Fainting

Severe hives

Questions?

STRATEGIES


- Identify areas to intervene
- Regular cleaning & maintenance
- Open conversation
- Have a Plan of Action
- Educating employees
- Promote aligning benefits
- Make employee accommodations



SUPPORTS



Flexible work scheduling policy

- Air quality data
- Wellness AtoZ Allergies Quiz
- Scratch 'N Sniff handout  Dignity Health.
- USDA approved generic EpiPen
- Existing employee benefits
- CDC Asthma & Allergies
- NIOSH Work-Related Asthma



QUESTIONS?



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