

Scratch and Sniff:

Understanding Allergies and How to Treat Them

The basics – what are allergies?

An allergy reaction is an overreaction of the body's normal defense mechanism to something that it perceived as foreign to the body. They can usually be treated by avoiding things you are allergic to, or by using over the counter medicine; more severe reactions should be evaluated by a doctor.

Types of reactions, their symptoms & their treatment:

Allergic Rhinitis

Symptoms: Sneezing, runny nose, stuffy nose, watery eyes

Treatment Options: Antihistamines, nasal antihistamines, nasal steroids

Allergic conjunctivitis

Symptoms: Irritation of the eye due to pollen or other environmental factors

Treatment Options: Allergy eyedrops are most effective; antihistamines work as well

Hives

Symptoms: Red, irritated lesions on the skin that may come and go

Source is often difficult to find—can be foods, pollen, etc. (not typically personal care products)

Treatment Options: cold compresses, steroidal or antihistamine cream/pills.

What about food allergies?

Food intolerance is not a true allergy and indicates difficulty digesting or metabolizing a particular food. Typically patients have symptoms related to digestion: pain, bloating, diarrhea. The degree of symptoms varies based on amount ingested. **Common:** Lactose, fructose → migraines

Food allergy involves a true reaction of the immune system. Reactions can be triggered with even very small amounts of food; symptoms are unpredictable and may include digestive symptoms. **Common:** Nuts, shellfish, fish, wheat, milk, soy, eggs. Most allergies begin in childhood but they can develop in adults as well. **Symptoms include:** itching, hives, swelling of lips, face, throat, nausea, cramps, diarrhea, wheezing, anaphylaxis.

Oral allergy syndrome (pollen - food allergy syndrome) Proteins in foods are similar to the proteins in pollen that the person may be allergic to. **Common:** Nuts berries melons peaches. **Symptoms include:** itching of the mouth, mild swelling of mouth, face, tongue. Generally a reaction develops minutes after ingesting the food and does not occur with cooked foods.

What to do? **Avoid foods that you are allergic or intolerant to.**

Tips and Tricks to Avoid Allergic Reactions:

Avoid carpeting and use smooth flooring when possible

If you have pets with fur, try to keep them outside (and cool! Beware of summer months!)
If inside, keep them out of the bedroom and off as much furniture as possible (especially beds)

Use air conditioning in the warmer months to get rid of outdoor pollens or allergens

Clean all air filters, air conditioner filters, and deck filters at each change of season

Family Medicine

Doug Jones, MD, FAAFP



Doug Jones, MD, FAAFP, is a Faculty Physician with Dignity Health Medical Group and the Program Director for the Family Medicine Residency at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center.

Dr. Jones' expertise includes Treatment of Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes, and he is board certified in Family Medicine. Dr. Jones received his medical degree from Wake Forest University School of Medicine. He completed his post-graduate medical training in Family Medicine at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona, and a fellowship in Faculty Development at The University of Arizona in Tucson.

Special interests include management of chronic health conditions including diabetes, hypertension, and obesity, as well as preventive medicine.

For more information—or to make an appointment with Dr. Jones or a member of his team—please call 602.406.3153.

Keep your windows at home and car closed whenever it is possible

Avoid spending time outdoors during the times that your allergies are acting up

Use the hottest water possible to read your laundry of dust mites

Avoid furnishings that gather dust

Ban indoor smoking

Still have questions?

Looking for a new physician to care for you or a family member?

Read the bio on Dr. Jones to the left and feel free to call our team to schedule an appointment!

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