Allergies, Generic

Allergies may happen from anything your body is sensitive to. This may be food, medicines, pollens, chemicals, and nearly anything around you in everyday life that produces allergens. An allergen is anything that causes an allergy producing substance. Heredity is often a factor in causing these problems. This means you may have some of the same allergies as your parents.

Food allergies happen in all age groups. Food allergies are some of the most severe and life threatening**.** Some common food allergies are cow's milk, seafood, eggs, nuts, wheat, and soybeans.

SYMPTOMS

- Swelling around the mouth.
- An itchy red rash or hives.
- Vomiting or diarrhea.
- Difficulty breathing.

SEVERE ALLERGIC REACTIONS ARE LIFE-THREATENING.

This reaction is called *anaphylaxis*. It can cause the mouth and throat to swell and cause difficulty with breathing and swallowing. In severe reactions only a trace amount of food (for example, peanut oil in a salad) may cause death within seconds.

Seasonal allergies occur in all age groups. These are seasonal because they usually occur during the same season every year. They may be a reaction to molds, grass pollens, or tree pollens. Other causes of problems are house dust mite allergens, pet dander, and mold spores. The symptoms often consist of nasal congestion, a runny itchy nose associated with sneezing, and tearing itchy eyes. There is often an associated itching of the mouth and ears. The problems happen when you come in contact with pollens and other allergens. Allergens are the particles in the air that the body reacts to with an allergic reaction. This causes you to release allergic antibodies. Through a chain of events, these eventually cause you to release histamine into the blood stream. Although it is meant to be protective to the body, it is this release that causes your discomfort. This is why you were given anti-histamines to feel better. If you are unable to pinpoint the offending allergen, it may be determined by skin or blood testing. Allergies cannot be cured but can be controlled with medicine.

Hay fever is a collection of all or some of the seasonal allergy problems. It may often be treated with simple over-the-counter medicine such as diphenhydramine. Take medicine as directed. **Do not** drink alcohol or drive while taking this medicine. Check with your caregiver or package insert for child dosages.

If these medicines are not effective, there are many new medicines your caregiver can prescribe. Stronger medicine such as nasal spray, eye drops, and corticosteroids may be used if the first things you try do not work well. Other treatments such as immunotherapy or desensitizing injections can be used if all else fails. Follow up with your caregiver if problems continue. These seasonal allergies are usually not life threatening. They are generally more of a nuisance that can often be handled using medicine.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- If unsure what causes a reaction, keep a diary of foods eaten and symptoms that follow. Avoid foods that cause reactions.
- If hives or rash are present:
  - Take medicine as directed.
  - You may use an over-the-counter antihistamine (diphenhydramine) for hives and itching as needed.
  - Apply cold compresses (cloths) to the skin or take baths in cool water. Avoid hot baths or showers. Heat

will make a rash and itching worse.

- If you are severely allergic:
  - Following a treatment for a severe reaction, hospitalization is often required for closer follow-up.
  - Wear a medic-alert bracelet or necklace stating the allergy.
  - You and your family must learn how to give adrenaline or use an anaphylaxis kit.
  - If you have had a severe reaction, always carry your anaphylaxis kit or EpiPen® with you. Use this medicine as directed by your caregiver if a severe reaction is occurring. Failure to do so could have a fatal outcome.

SEE YOUR CAREGIVER IF:

- You suspect a food allergy. Symptoms generally happen within 30 minutes of eating a food.
- Your symptoms have not gone away within 2 days or are getting worse.
- You develop new symptoms.
- You want to retest yourself or your child with a food or drink you think causes an allergic reaction. ***Never do this if an anaphylactic reaction to that food or drink has happened before. Only do this under the care of a caregiver.***

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have difficulty breathing, are wheezing, or have a tight feeling in your chest or throat.
- You have a swollen mouth, or you have hives, swelling, or itching all over your body.
- You have had a severe reaction that has responded to your anaphylaxis kit or an EpiPen®. These reactions may return when the medicine has worn off. **These reactions should be considered life threatening.**

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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