

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at Jerry Gregory & Associates .

Allergy Basics

An allergy is a negative reaction that occurs as a result of coming into contact with a normally harmless substance. The substance can be breathed in through the nose, injected into the body (as in a bee sting), ingested, or swallowed.

Allergy Symptoms

Allergy symptoms often go unrecognized because people falsely believe they are developing a cold or the flu. While the symptoms are similar, allergy symptoms can be differentiated. The most common signs that you may have an allergy are:

- Sneezing;
- Red, itchy, and watery eyes;
- Dry throat; and
- Stuffy nose.

Risk Factors for Allergies

Allergies can develop at any stage of life. However, people who are most susceptible include those who are under age forty and have at least one parent with allergies. In addition, people with an allergic condition such as asthma often suffer from allergies not related to their asthma.

Some allergies can also change or disappear over time, while others recur at the same time each year and last for a few weeks or months.

Preventive Techniques

Allergists will perform skin tests to determine the substance that you are allergic to. Avoiding that substance, and practicing a few of the following preventive techniques, will often help you avoid your allergy.

- Stay indoors on days when pollen counts are high.
- Keep your home clean and as dust-free as possible.
- Ask your allergist about the benefits of a home air cleaner.
- Put pillows and mattresses in allergen-proof encasements.
- Use a vacuum cleaner with double bags or allergen-trapping bags.
- Try not to have dogs and cats in your home.
- Choose hardwood floors with scatter rugs rather than wall-to-wall carpeting.

Allergy Treatment

Treatment for most allergies is available over-the-counter and by prescription. Your doctor may suggest several treatment methods.

Antihistamine medications work by

blocking the effects of histamines—the chemicals that cause many allergy symptoms. Some antihistamines may cause drowsiness.

Nasal sprays are often recommended to reduce nasal inflammation, congestion, sneezing, and runny nose. Or, decongestants help dry up tissues in the nasal passages and reduce the swelling that causes nasal stuffiness.

If your allergy symptoms are severe or chronic, your allergist may suggest a series of allergy shots. Contact your physician to determine which treatment option is best suited for your particular allergy symptoms.



Did you know...

According to the American Academy of Allergy and Immunology, allergic diseases affect more than twenty percent of people in the United States.