



# Think you have an allergy?

We can help you find out – and help you manage your allergy so you can feel better and live better.

[Find out more inside.](#)

## What is an allergy?

Do you often suffer from sneezing, itchy eyes, rash or diarrhea? If so, you may have an allergy. Allergies are among the most common chronic conditions that affect people around the world. Symptoms can range from mild discomfort to a severe or even life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis.

Many people become accustomed to their symptoms and suffer needlessly – but simple tests are available to help you find out if you are allergic to a particular substance and help you manage your allergy.

# 1 in 4

It is estimated that 1 in 4 people suffer from allergies.

## What causes allergies?

Our immune system protects us from invading organisms that can cause illness. Sometimes however, our immune system will react to foods, pollens, dust, or medications and produce an allergic reaction.

During an allergic reaction, your body produces antibodies that trigger certain symptoms. These symptoms can vary considerably depending on the allergen involved, as well as your age. For example, infants and toddlers often develop allergic reactions to foods such as milk and eggs, whereas children and adults can become allergic to things they might inhale, such as pollen or dust.

## Common symptoms of specific allergens

BODY PART	SYMPTOMS	COMMON TRIGGERS OR ALLERGENS
NOSE	Sneezing Itchy, runny, stuffy Mouth breathing	Pollen, house dust mites, cockroaches, pets and other animals
EYES	Itchy, red, watery, swollen	Pollen, house dust mites, cockroaches, pets and other animals
MOUTH	Tingling and itching throat, mouth, and/or lips Swelling	Fruits, vegetables, nuts and legumes
SKIN	Eczema (dry, itchy) Rashes, hives, swelling	Nuts, shellfish, eggs, milk
LUNGS	Coughing, wheezing Chest tightness Shortness of breath Asthma	Pollen, house dust mites, cockroaches, pets and other animals, food
GASTROINTESTINAL	Diarrhea Pain Nausea Vomiting Weight loss	<b>Infants and toddlers:</b> Eggs, milk, wheat, soya bean  <b>Children and adults:</b> Eggs, milk, shellfish, wheat, peanuts, hazelnuts and other tree nuts, fruits and vegetables
VARIOUS ANAPHYLACTIC REACTIONS	<b>EARLY:</b> Hives, tingling and itching around the mouth, swelling around mouth and eyes  <b>SEVERE:</b> Itching, tingling and swelling of mouth and throat, abnormally low blood pressure, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, shortness of breath, asthma	Peanuts, tree nuts, fish, soybean, seafood, milk, eggs, seeds, fruits, drugs, bee and wasp venoms

## How are allergies diagnosed?

Your family history, medical history and a physical examination will help determine if your symptoms are caused by an allergy. There are also two types of tests available to help diagnose an allergy – a skin prick test and a blood test.

### SKIN PRICK TEST

A small amount of allergen is placed on your skin and the skin is gently scratched. If a reaction occurs, it may be the result of an allergy. This test is performed by an Allergist

### BLOOD TEST

A small amount of blood is drawn and the level of allergen-specific antibodies is measured. If the antibody level that corresponds to a specific allergen or a component of an allergen is raised, it may be the result of an allergy.

100  
PLUS

At Dynacare we test for more than 100 different allergens – such as food, animal dander, pollens, mould, trees, weeds, grasses and insect venom.

In addition, we can also test for more than 20 allergen components, such as peanut components.



## What treatments are available?



### Which test is right for you?

A blood test has certain advantages over the skin prick test:

- For some foods, blood testing can be more accurate than skin testing
- It is more convenient and less invasive, as a single blood sample can be used to test for multiple allergens and allergen components
- Medication you may be taking does not influence the result
- There is no risk of an anaphylactic reaction
- It does not rely upon the condition of your skin
- It can be used for infants as young as six weeks old
- It can help determine whether allergy shots may help
- It can be easily ordered by your family physician

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### Avoidance

For some allergies such as food, avoidance may be the only treatment you need. This may be enough to prevent your allergy symptoms, so you won't need to take any medications or other treatments.

### Medications

If avoidance is not enough, you can take medication to treat your allergy and help control your symptoms. There are also fast-acting medicines such as epinephrine that can be injected to stop an anaphylactic reaction.

### Allergy shots

Allergy shots, also called immunotherapy, can be taken to increase your tolerance to allergens. These shots are usually recommended if you suffer from severe allergies or if you have allergy symptoms that last for more than three months each year. Allergy shots do not cure allergies, but reduce your immune system reaction to the allergen.

### How do I get tested for an allergy?

If you think you or your child has allergy symptoms, talk to your family physician about getting a blood test. If your blood test reveals you have an allergy, you may be referred to an allergist for ongoing assessment and management of your allergy.

**Don't stop being tested. Allergies can change over time.**

Infants may outgrow their allergy to milk and eggs as they get older. But other allergies may progress into more severe conditions. That's why follow-up testing is critical for accurately managing your allergy and to help you feel better and live better.



Allergy tests may be covered by some private insurance health plans. All information current as of January, 2016.