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Max Allergy Clinic



**Max
Healthcare**

Caring for you... for life

Introduction

Around 10% of the Indian population is allergic to some allergen (pollen, dust, certain preservatives, colourings, etc.) or the other. Some of them suffer all year round while others experience symptoms only when seasonal pollen fill the air. Regardless of the frequency or severity, the first step in any effective allergy treatment plan is to see an Allergist or Immunologist or a Physician who specialises in treating allergies.

What is an allergy?

Allergy is a hypersensitive / exaggerated response of the immune system to specific substances called allergens (such as pollen, stings, drugs or food items), which in most people would not have resulted in any other symptoms or reaction.

What happens during an allergic reaction?

An allergy occurs when the allergen in question, e.g. pollen, triggers a reaction in the body of the individual. When the allergen comes in contact with the body, the immune system believes that the specific allergen is harmful and so produces an antibody called IgE (E-class Immunoglobulin) to fight .

This antibody then triggers certain chemicals like histamine to be released from cells (called mast cells) in our skin, lungs, nose or intestines, causing the various symptoms of an allergic reaction.

Most Common Allergens

a) Inhaled from environment:

- House dust mites are one of the most common causes of allergies.
- Pollen from grass, trees and weeds are the second most common cause of allergies. Pollen allergies are usually seasonal. This type of allergy is called hay-fever.
- The family pet is also a common cause of an allergy. Usually the skin / fur of the pet causes the problem

b) Injected

- Insect bites from bees or wasps.
- Vaccines and Inoculation.

Precautions while performing an Allergy Test

It is advised to stop all anti-allergic medication 24 hours prior to the allergy tests being done. If you have high blood pressure, any heart problem, diabetes, are pregnant or are breast-feeding, please inform your doctor.

How are allergies treated?

Prevention is the key for individuals suffering from allergy. If you know you have an allergy to something, you should make the effort to avoid or reduce contact with the specific allergen.

There are also drugs available which can ease an allergic reaction. The most common drugs used for allergy symptoms are antihistamines and steroids, which come in the form of nasal sprays, creams or tablets. Your doctor will guide you on the same.

Please call the 24 Hour emergency 4055 4055 for an appointment with your Chest specialist or Dermatologist at Max Healthcare.

c) Ingested:

- Food and drinks, such as milk, eggs, fish, wheat, citrus fruits, seafood and peanuts, preservatives and colourings can also trigger attacks.
- Certain medicines like Sulphur and Penicillin.

d) Through contact:

Cosmetics, toiletries, jewellery and washing powders, all contain common allergens. Symptoms are typically identified by an itchy, red rash.

Common Allergic Reactions

Part of the Body	Symptom / Reaction	Name of the Disease
Sinus	Frontal head discomfort, facial pain, yellow/green nasal discharge	Sinusitis
Nose & Throat	Blocked or runny nose with sneezing. Itchy, sore throat	Allergic Rhinitis (Hay-Fever)
Eyes	Watery, itchy eyes	Allergic Conjunctivitis
Skin	Itchy, inflamed skin with red rashes	Urticaria
Lungs	Airway obstruction, coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, tightness of chest	Allergic Asthma
Mouth & Stomach	Swelling of the lips and tongue, Diarrhoea, sickness and vomiting	Food Allergy
General	Pain, itching and swelling at the sting site Seizures, Cardiac arrhythmia, shock, respiratory distress.	Insect Sting Allergy Anaphylaxis

Note: The information provided in this literature is not a substitute for professional medical care.

Why do people get allergies?

It is not exactly known why people get allergies; some experts believe that it could be hereditary. This is especially true for certain reactions such as asthma, eczema and hay-fever. If one or both parents have allergies, there is a high chance the child may also have allergies. However, the child only inherits the likelihood of having allergies, not a particular allergy. A child is also likely to develop allergies if exposed to passive smoking.

Many experts believe that the increase in the number of people developing allergies could be due to the lifestyles many of us lead, and the effect it has on our immune system.

Increased pollution from vehicle exhausts and other environmental pollutants may also be a contributing factor.

How are allergies diagnosed?

Allergy tests allow the allergist to identify the substance to which you are allergic. In addition, allergy testing may be done for patients suffering from asthma, eczema or skin rashes to determine if an allergy is causing the condition or making it worse.

Your doctor will question you about your symptoms and when they usually occur. The skin test will help to identify the allergen(s) responsible, so if possible, you can avoid them in the future.

When you are exposed to an allergen, the immune system produces the IgE antibody. People who have an allergy to a substance will have raised levels of the IgE antibody, and it is this antibody that the test looks for.

Allergies can be diagnosed by using the following tests:

Skin Prick Test

This test involves using a small needle to prick and inject a drop of fluid containing a known allergen, just under the surface of the skin. The test is usually carried out on the skin on the inner forearm, although with young children it may be done on the back so they cannot see what is happening.

A positive result to the skin prick test is indicated within minutes. The skin around the area pricked will become red and itchy and after about 20 minutes the area swells and a raised circle known as 'weal' will appear.

The larger the weal, the more likely that you are allergic to the specific allergen. This blister-like circle will fade within a few hours.

If your skin does not react in any way, it indicates a negative result. 20 - 25 allergens may be tested at one time.

Contents of the Skin Prick Test:

- Consultation with the doctor, involving taking family history - 20 minutes
- Administration of the test depending on the number of allergens - 30 to 50 minutes
- Waiting period - 15 minutes
- Evaluation as well as advice by the doctor - 20 to 30 minutes.

Patch Tests

A Patch Test is a reliable way of determining if you are suffering from Allergic contact dermatitis and the cause for it. Allergic contact dermatitis is an itchy skin condition caused by an allergic reaction to material in contact with the skin. It arises some hours after contact with the responsible material, and settles down over some days, provided the skin is no longer in contact with it.

The Patch Test involves applying a number of allergens in small amounts to a small area of the skin on the upper back and then covering it with waterproof hypoallergenic tape. The Patch test is left on the back for two days. When you return after two days, your doctor looks at your back to see which allergen(s) caused the reaction. Patch testing helps to test a range of substances specific to each individual.

Some typical examples of Allergic Contact dermatitis include:

- Eczema of the wrist underlying a watchstrap, due to contact allergy to nickel.
- Hand dermatitis caused by thiuram, an antioxidant chemical used in the manufacture of rubber gloves.
- Itchy red face due to contact allergy with Kaphon CG, a preservative in the moisturizer.

It is important to recognize how you are in contact with the responsible substance, so that whenever possible, you can avoid it.

Dermatologists apply patch tests in patients with Dermatitis, to find out whether their skin condition may be caused or aggravated by Contact Allergy.