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PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: ALL ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S ALLERGIES



Does your child start sneezing more than usual in the fall or spring? Is there a specific food she cannot eat? Maybe he gets a runny nose or his eyes start to water. These are all responses to the world around us and are called allergies.

An allergy (say: al-ur-jee) is the body's reaction to certain plants, animals, foods, or other things. The immune system protects us from harmful objects in the environment, but sometimes it tries to "fight" common things. This fight can cause us to sneeze, have a runny nose or watery eyes, or several other symptoms.

Common allergies

- **Foods** – Many people have food allergies. Common food allergies may be milk, wheat, soy, nuts, eggs, and seafood.
- **Plants** – These include flowers, trees, and grass.
- **Animals** – Some people react to an animal's dry skin, saliva, or hair.

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Food allergies occur all year long, but plant allergies may be seasonal.

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Symptoms

If you or your child have allergies, you may recognize a few of these symptoms:

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Itchy eyes
- Watery eyes
- Sore throat

Food allergies can cause some of these symptoms:

- Hives (red itchy bumps)
- Stuffy nose
- Stomach cramps
- Vomiting

Some allergies may cause shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

Food allergies will occur all year long, but some plant allergies may peak only in the fall or the spring. Each person is different and has a different reaction.

How you can help your child control an allergy

If your child has allergic symptoms, contact her healthcare provider. The healthcare provider may prescribe allergy medicine such as pills, liquids, or even nose sprays. Make sure your child takes the medicine as the healthcare provider prescribes. Unfortunately, many medicines do not help with food allergies. People with some food allergies may have to stay away from the allergic foods.

Pets – if your child is allergic to an animal:

- Keep pets out of child's bedroom
- Bathe animal at least once a week
- Vacuum and clean on a regular basis
- May have to find a new home for the pet

If you think your child may have allergies, talk to your healthcare provider.



Food Allergies – if your child has a food allergy:

- It is important to read all food labels
- Prepare safe snacks for eating away from home
- Teach your child how to see if a food is safe
- Many children grow out of food allergies

If you think your child may have allergies, talk to your healthcare provider. He or she will be able to help find out what the allergy is and how to treat it.

REFERENCES:

- Kids Health. "Learning about allergies" The Nemours Foundation. Nov. 2007. <http://www.kidshealth.org/>

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