



Indiana Association for Infant & Toddler Mental Health

Allergies are the results of a chain reaction that starts in the immune system. Your immune system controls how your body defends itself. For instance, if you have an allergy to pollen, your immune system identifies pollen as an invader or *allergen*. Your immune system overreacts by producing antibodies called *Immunoglobulin E (IgE)*. These antibodies travel to cells that release chemicals, causing an allergic reaction.

Seasonal, food, and other allergies are common. Recent surveys reveal that more than half of all United States citizens test positive to one or more allergens, that allergic diseases may affect as many as 40 to 50 million Americans, and that over 50% of homes had at least six detectable allergens present. In pediatric populations, allergies may be misidentified as other medical problems, such as ear infections. Although allergies do not cause developmental concerns, they may be harder to detect in children with disabilities and could lead to behavior problems because the child feels uncomfortable. Families should consult their primary care providers if they have concerns about possible allergies.

You should see an allergist if:

Your allergies are causing symptoms such as chronic sinus infections, nasal congestion or difficulty breathing.

You experience hay fever or other allergy symptoms several months out of the year.

Antihistamines and over-the-counter medications do not control your allergy symptoms or create unacceptable side-effects, such as drowsiness.

Your asthma or allergies are interfering with your ability to carry on day-to-day activities or decrease your quality of life.

You are experiencing warning signs of serious asthma, such as:

- You sometimes have to struggle to catch your breath, are frequently short of breath or feel tightness in your chest.
- You often wheeze or cough, especially at night or after exercise
- You have previously been diagnosed with asthma, and you have frequent asthma attacks even though you are taking your asthma medication.

Learn More!

[American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology](#)

[American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology](#)

[Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network](#)



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