



ALLERGIES

What is it?

Quite simply, an allergy of any type stems from the body's inability to determine which foreign substances are dangerous. Symptoms can range from runny nose to headaches to more severe and life-threatening reactions such as anaphylaxis. These reactions are mediated by the immune system when it senses that a substance (food, inhalant, or chemical) is dangerous to the body. Once the body determines that a substance is dangerous, it releases antibodies that bind to blood and tissue cells. These cells then release inflammatory mediators that cause the symptoms of an allergy attack.

Key ideas:

- Allergy is a common underlying cause of many illnesses
- Most common food allergies are dairy, wheat, egg, soy, nuts, fish and shellfish
- Allergic rhinitis (hay fever) affects up to 25% of the population
- Family history of allergy is often present
- Early introduction of solid foods can cause allergies in infants
- Many patients find they react to multiple substances from the same family
- Breastfeeding is protective against the development of allergy
- Allergy is more common in patients who live in very clean environments

How do we treat it?

Avoidance of the substance is recommended as we work with your body to decrease allergic tendency. Treatment will include looking at why you developed your allergy and how we can support your immune system in re-learning what is dangerous. You may find that a key issue early in life led to your allergic tendency, and this will be addressed. As your immune system learns that benign substances do not need a reaction, you will be able to encounter your allergen once in a while with no ill effects.