



**SAN FRANCISCO
HEALTH PLAN™**

Here for you

What are Allergies?

Allergies happen when a person's body reacts to substances that are harmless to other people. These substances can make us sneeze, wheeze, cough, itch, or worse. Allergic reactions can be bad and even deadly, but that is very rare. Most people with allergies have annoying symptoms that can be controlled, and people with allergies can lead normal lives.

Common Allergies

Anaphylaxis is a health emergency. Food, insect stings, medicines, and latex can cause this in some people. Symptoms include a sense of doom; warmth or flush; swollen lips; faintness; and chest tightness. These can progress into seizures, shock, heart, and breathing problems.

Allergic Asthma: Happens when an allergen (a substance) causes asthma: coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, or chest tightness.

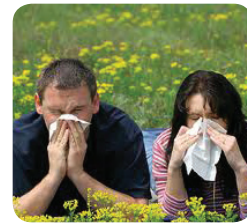
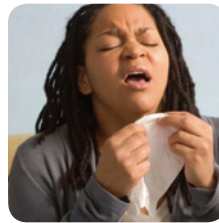
Drug Allergy: Reactions to medicines happen to many people. Antibiotics, anti-convulsants, and insulin are drugs that cause many allergic reactions. Usually the reaction is a rash that goes away when the medicine is stopped. You should see your provider if you think this is happening to you.

Eye Allergy: Pollen and mold cause this a lot. Signs are itchy and watery eyes.

Food Allergy: Symptoms can include itchy or swelling lips or tongue, tightness of the throat with hoarseness, throwing up, or passing out.

Latex Allergy: People who use latex products daily are most at risk. Look for a red, itchy rash (contact dermatitis), sneezing and other breathing problems, and coughing.

Mold Allergy: Many people allergic to mold have problems outdoors on days when mold spores are in the air. You may also have allergies indoors if mold is inside your home, school, or workplace. Problems can include itchy eyes, sneezing, or runny nose.



Pet Allergy: It isn't your pet's fur that is the problem. It is the protein in a pet's skin flakes, spit, and pee. Problems usually include itchy eyes, sneezing, or runny nose.

Rhinitis (Hay Fever): Pollen causes most seasonal allergic rhinitis. People can get a stuffy or runny nose, sneezing, itchy nose, and itching of the roof of the mouth or ears.

Skin Allergy: Skin allergies (also called contact dermatitis) happen when your skin comes in touch with something it is sensitive or allergic to. Also, allergies to other things like food or proteins you breathe in may cause rashes. Signs are redness, swelling, itching, and rashes; often due to poison ivy, oak, and sumac.

Stinging Insect Allergy: Most of us get redness and swelling at the site of an insect bite, but people with an insect allergy are at risk for more severe problems. There is often pain, itching, and swelling at the sting site or over a larger area and can cause anaphylaxis.

Sources:

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

For more information call Customer Service at **(415) 547-7800** or visit **www.sfhp.org**
Free 24/7 Nurse Help Line (877) 977-3397