



ALLERGIEZENTRUM SCHWEIZ
CENTRE D'ALLERGIE SUISSE
CENTRO ALLERGIE SVIZZERA

Allergies – simple to explain



Authors

Specialist services team
aha! Swiss Allergy Centre

With the specialised support of:



Prof. Dr med. Arthur Helbling
FMH specialist in Allergology and Clinical Immunology,
University Clinic for Rheumatology, Clinical Immunology and
Allergology at the Inselspital Bern, Allergology Department at
Ziegler Hospital in Bern, Hospital Network Bern

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What is an allergy?

In order to protect our health, our body possesses an immune system. It is responsible for recognizing and destroying foreign substances in our body. It is thanks to it that we are not sick all the time. But the immune system could attack a substance which is otherwise harmless to the body causing sometimes an allergic reaction. These substances are called allergens. If sufferers come into contact with these allergens, for instance by touching, ingestion or by inhaling them, the body reacts with a defense that is inappropriate and is referred to as an allergy. An allergy or an allergic disease is a hypersensitivity reaction of the body to natural proteins originating from plant or animal products. The body's reaction against chemical substances is less common.

The following allergies are the most common allergic diseases in Switzerland:

- Pollen allergy
- House dust mite allergy and allergic reactions caused by other mites
- Food allergy
- Insect venom allergy
- Animal allergy
- Latex allergy (rubber component)
- Drug allergy
- Mold allergy
- Nickel allergy
- Perfume and preservatives allergy

Allergies, neurodermitis and allergic asthma are genetically determined. If a family member already suffers from asthma, atopic dermatitis or an allergy, there is a risk that another family member could also develop this specific disease.

Skin and respiratory diseases caused by an allergic reaction

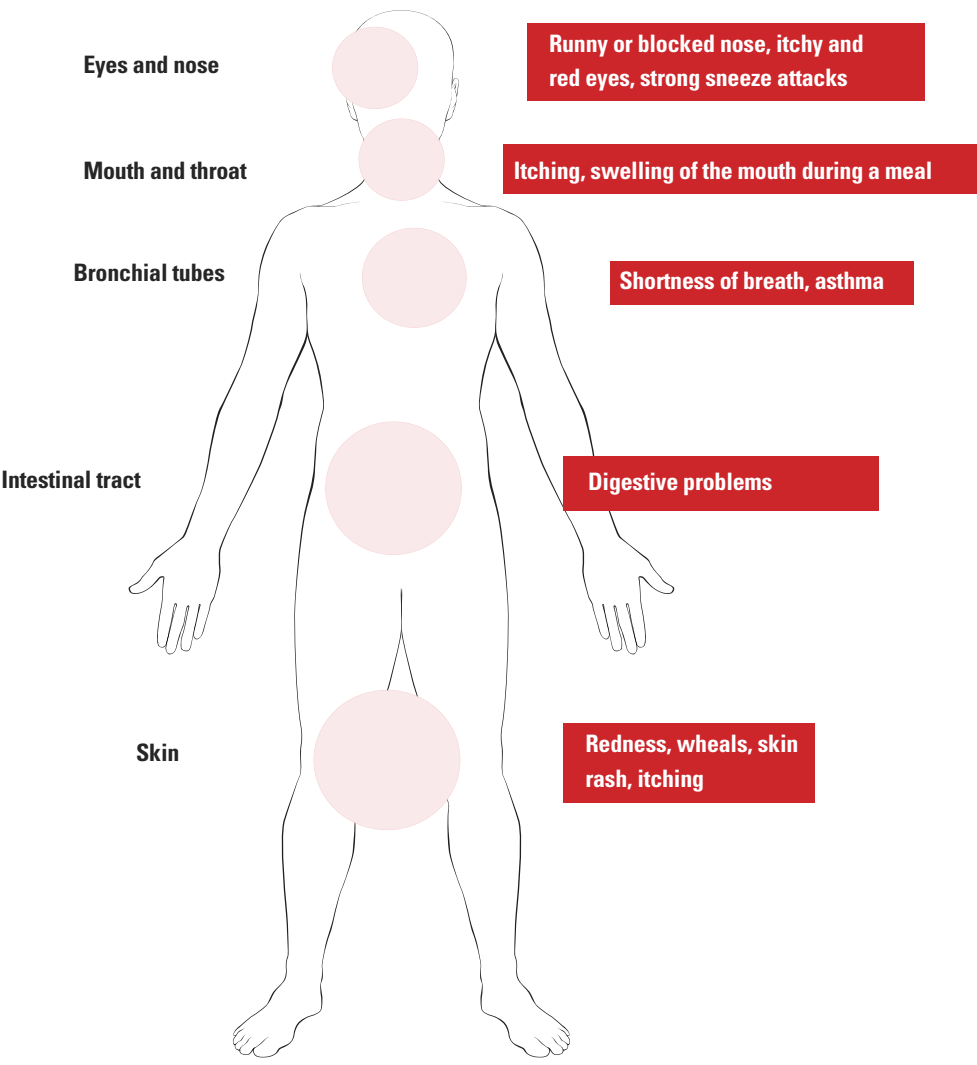
Atopic dermatitis

Normally, our skin has complete protection so that it does not dry out and no foreign substances enter it. In the case of atopic dermatitis, this protection is weakened. It is a skin disease which causes the skin to release less fat and lose more moisture. This leads to changes, the so-called eczemas. Atopic dermatitis is also called neurodermatitis. Eczemas (skin rashes) occur in episodic attacks. In more than half of the sufferers, the disease starts in the first year of life. Neurodermatitis cannot be cured. The genetic predisposition to develop eczemas is lifelong. However, eczemas disappear frequently during adulthood.

Allergic asthma

Asthma is a respiratory disease in which the lungs are irritated by inflammation causing shortness of breath. The respiratory tract and muscles are narrowed. Swelling appears and mucus builds up in the respiratory tract. That's why respiration gets difficult and hard. Asthma can begin at any age. If a pollen, house dust mite or animal allergy is not treated adequately, the risk of developing precocious asthma increases.

Allergic symptoms can appear in many parts of the body as well as affect many different types of organs:



How does an allergy arise?

Everyone can have allergies. If both parents and siblings have an allergy, the risk of a person developing an allergy as well is very high.

1. When it comes into contact with the allergen, the immune system decides whether it is foreign or harmful to the body.
2. IgE antibodies against allergens are built up in the blood.
3. On subsequent exposure to this allergen which is recognized by the IgE antibodies, the immune system sends out an alarm and provokes a reaction called an allergy.

In recent years and decades, allergies have generally increased worldwide. The reasons for this have still not been fully explained. It is obvious, however, that allergies are on the increase in industrial countries with a high standard of living and improved hygiene. There is an assumption that the high hygiene standards are partly responsible. The immune system is put under far less stress from natural enemies (but also harmless bacteria, viruses), so that it has forgotten how to distinguish between harmful and harmless substances and overreacts to harmless proteins such as pollen.

What can I do?

Have you any of the symptoms described in this brochure and do these bother you? In that case:

1. Write down what sort of symptoms you have and when these appear. You can use the attached questionnaire.
2. Go to your doctor for further examination if the symptoms bother you. If an allergy is suspected, an allergy evaluation can be done. In skin tests, various allergen solutions are dropped onto the skin. When the test side is red, itching and swelling, the test is mostly positive. The blood test measures the IgE antibodies in the blood.

Therapy

The doctor can prescribe appropriate medication to treat symptoms. For some allergies (e.g. pollen, insect venom) a specific immunotherapy can be used. This is also called desensitisation. The aim is to get the body used to the foreign substances (allergens). The allergens are injected under the skin or administered as tablets or drops. The therapy lasts for 3 to 5 years. Successful desensitisation aims to reduce or completely eradicate symptoms.

Important general information

Allergy ID card

If you are diagnosed with a severe allergy, your doctor will give you an allergy ID card (emergency medical ID). In Switzerland it is available in German, French and Italian, always combined with English. Always carry your allergy ID card with you, preferably in your wallet, in order to be able to show it in an emergency situation.

Doctor

If an allergy is suspected, your GP or paediatrician can do a first allergy evaluation. For some kinds of examinations, you will be referred to a specialist (allergologist).

Emergency situation

In an emergency situation contact immediately your doctor or request an ambulance (phone number 144).

Costs

The costs for allergy evaluation are covered by the compulsory health insurance in Switzerland. However, the drug costs are not always covered by the insurance. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you further information. The specific immunotherapy (desensitisation, see page 6: "What can I do?") is covered by the compulsory health insurance, too.

Contacts/Addresses

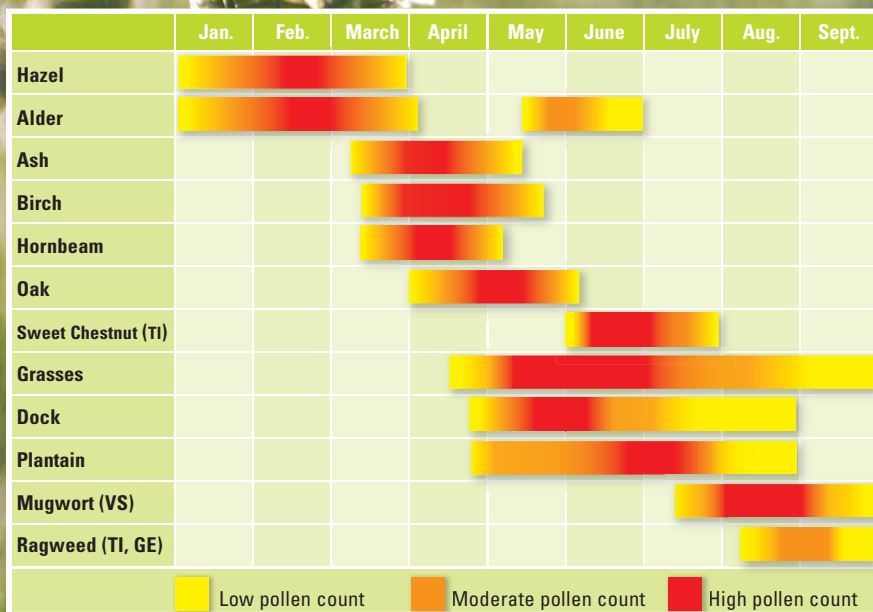
aha! Swiss Allergy Centre

- Free-of-charge advice, aha!infoline 031 359 90 50, info@aha.ch
- Detailed brochures on different subjects concerning allergies, asthma, atopic dermatitis and intolerances
- Exchange groups in various Swiss cities
- Website providing a lot of information and various offers of training courses: www.aha.ch

Counselling centres

- Mothers and fathers advice centres (www.muetterberatung.ch)
- Social services of your municipality
- Specialist migration and integration services in the communities, regions and cantons
- Migesplus www.migesplus.ch – the internet platform for multilingual information on health.

Pollen calendar



Pollen allergy/hay fever

If you are allergic to pollen, the inhalation of a small quantity of pollen may cause allergic reactions. Pollen consists of small granules set free by plants. In spring and summer, pollen is visible as a yellow layer on tables, cars and windowsills. The symptoms may occur as soon as the first trees and bushes start to bloom. This can already happen in January or February. A person suffering from pollen allergy may be allergic to one or several plants. That's the reason why some persons only manifest symptoms in spring, while others only do so in summer. It is also possible for someone to suffer from January to September.

Symptoms

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Red, itchy and painful nose
- Itching and/or streaming eyes
- Painful, red irritated eyes
- Tingling, itching and sensation of swelling on lips, tongue, palate and throat
- Itching in the inner ear
- Respiratory problems outdoors and at night
- Coughing (during sports, early in the morning or outdoors)
- Asthma

Therapy

During the pollen season, drugs should be taken daily, even on bad weather days. They are available in the form of nasal sprays, eye drops or tablets. To reduce the symptoms, a desensitisation (specific immunotherapy) can be used (see page 6).



Tips and tricks

- ◆ The symptoms are much more pronounced outside than in the apartment.
- ◆ Just before a rain shower, the air humidity is extremely high. The pollen grains absorb a lot of moisture and burst. That's why the pollen count is very high in the air before a rain shower and most of the sufferers experience more severe symptoms.
- ◆ Ventilate rooms intensively two or three times per day.
- ◆ Wear sunglasses and perhaps hats outside.
- ◆ Wash your hair before going to bed.
- ◆ Do not dry laundry outdoors.
- ◆ Any type of indoor sport is suitable.

Food allergy

Certain foods can cause allergies. Allergic reactions can be induced by direct skin contact with certain foods and by eating or by inhalation of small particles.

Which foods are very often responsible for allergies?

Food allergies can occur at any age.

Typical triggers of food allergies in infants:

Cow's milk, hen's egg, peanuts, nuts

Typical triggers of food allergies in adolescents and adults:

Apple, nuts, kiwi, peach, celery, carrots, fish, peanut, soy, crustaceans

Symptoms

- Itching, furry feeling and/or swollen lips, mouth and throat
- Nettle rash (urticaria), skin rash, swelling
- Nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramping
- Diarrhoea
- Shortness of breath, asthma
- Racing heart
- Feeling of weakness, collapse

Therapie

Food allergies cannot be cured. Therefore, the food causing the allergy must be omitted. In the case of

severe allergic reactions, sufferers receive emergency drugs from their doctor, which they must always carry on them.



Tips and tricks

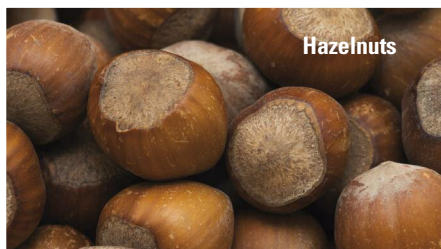
- ◆ Some foods, such as apples or carrots, are often well tolerated when they are cooked.
- ◆ Peeled or finely-chopped fruits are much more tolerable.
- ◆ When eating out at work or with friends/ relatives, inform them about your allergies.
- ◆ When shopping, always read the ingredients list to make sure you can tolerate the food, even those you have been using for a long time.

How are allergy triggers indicated on the packaging?

In Switzerland and in the EU, 14 food components have to be indicated on the packaging. If one of these components has been used in the production process, it must be listed and highlighted on the ingredient list.

Minute quantities of one food may get into another one, because e.g. they are produced with the same machine. This is declared with "may contain traces of ..." or "can contain ...". On the packaging of milk chocolate it may for example say "may contain traces of hazelnuts".

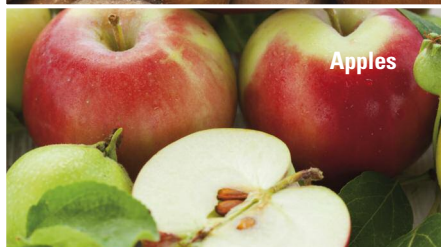
Frequent triggers for food allergies



Hazelnuts



Peanuts



Apples



Wheat



Milk



Hen's eggs



Fish



Prawns

Example of a list of ingredients

French salad dressing

Sunflower oil 41%, water, vinegar, cooking salt, **mustard**, **pasteurized egg yolk**, sugar, modified waxy maize starch, onions, thickening agent (Xanthan gum, guar seed flour), yeast extract, garlic.

Triggers for food allergies and intolerances

The following 14 ingredients must always be indicated on the packaging:

- **Cereals containing gluten** such as wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, wild emmer, kamut, unripe spelt grain, einkorn, triticale, e.g. also in couscous or in baked goods
- **Milk** (including lactose), e.g. in yoghurt or cheese or in baked goods
- **Eggs**, e.g. in pasta and cakes
- **Fish**, e.g. trout, herring, pangasius
- **Crustaceans**, e.g. crab, lobster
- **Soy bean**, e.g. tofu, soy sauce
- **Thick-skinned fruit (nuts)**, i.e. almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashew nuts, pecan nuts, brazil nuts, pistachios, macadamia nuts and Queensland nuts, e.g. in chocolate, biscuits and baked goods
- **Sesame seeds**, e.g. in Asian dishes
- **Celery**, e.g. in sauces and soups
- **Mustard**, e.g. in salad dressing and other sauces
- **Peanuts**, e.g. in other nuts or sweets
- **Sulphur dioxide and sulphites** at concentrations of more than 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/litre expressed as SO₂, e.g. in wine and dried fruits
- **Lupine**, e.g. in flour mixtures
- **Molluscs**, e.g. bivalves, snails

All ingredients must also be listed when they are made of the indicated food components.

Food intolerances

A distinction must be drawn between food allergies and food intolerances. These intolerance reactions cause discomfort, but not life-threatening symptoms. They cannot be detected by an allergy test. If you suffer from any of the symptoms cited in this chapter, ask your healthcare professional for more information. In this brochure, the following four food intolerances are presented: lactose intolerance, coeliac disease, histamine intolerance and fructose malabsorption.

Lactose intolerance

Milk and dairy products contain lactose (milk sugar). After eating and drinking, the lactose is split up into its components during digestion. Therefore, the digestive enzyme lactase is needed. In the case of lactose (milk sugar) intolerance, sufferers are unable to produce the digestive enzyme lactase or cannot produce it in sufficient quantities. That's why the lactose cannot be adequately digested.

Symptoms

- Abdominal pain and cramping
- Diarrhoea
- Flatulence, wind ("fart")
- Nausea

Therapy

- Use lactose-free special foods for cooking and baking. There is an infinite variety of lactose-free foods available in supermarkets and specialist health food stores, e.g. lactose-free milk, lactose-free yoghurt, lactose-free cream, lactose-free mozzarella and much more.
- Normal cow's milk products containing lactose should be avoided. Sheep's, goat's and mare's milk contain lactose and should also be avoided.
- Processed products (e.g. sausages, cold meat, salads or meat sauces, pastries) may also contain lactose. This must be declared on the list of ingredients.
- To enable you to enjoy eating out without further discomfort, the digestive enzyme lactase is also available in tablet or powder form. You can obtain the enzymes from the pharmacy.



Tips and tricks

- ◆ Hard cheese such as Parmesan or Sbrinz and butter are naturally lactose-free and in general well tolerated by the majority of those with lactose intolerance.
- ◆ A small quantity of dairy products is often well tolerated. Test your degree of tolerance.
- ◆ Inform your friends/relatives about your lactose intolerance.
- ◆ Always ask in a restaurant, if the dishes contain milk or dairy products.
- ◆ In some cultures, almost no milk or dairy products are consumed. Think about certain dishes from your culture which are appropriate for you.

- ◆ Milk sugar is generally better digested while eaten together with food rich in fat and protein.

Coeliac disease (intolerance to gluten)

Gluten intolerance, also known as coeliac disease, is an autoimmune reaction to gluten (a constituent of various cereal grains). The mucosal lining of the small intestine is damaged by gluten. If a gluten-free diet is maintained, it is generally possible to live without any symptoms.

Symptoms

In adults:

- Abdominal pain and cramping
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation
- Flatulence, wind ("fart")
- Deficiency symptoms (e.g. iron deficiency leading to anaemia)
- Fatigue
- Lack of concentration

In infants:

- No weight gain or even weight loss
- Non-age-appropriate growth
- Growth retardation
- Abdominal pain and cramping
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation
- Tearfulness, lack of energy

Therapy

- The following cereals contain gluten and must be omitted, even if they are processed or contained in other foods: wheat, spelt, barley, rye, oats, kamut, einkorn, unripe spelt grain, wild emmer and triticale.
- The following unprocessed foods are naturally gluten-free: rice, corn, millet, fonio, sorghum, buckwheat, quinoa, amaranth, teff, vegetables, fruit, meat, fish, eggs, milk, legumes (chickpeas, soy beans, beans, peas, lentils), lupines and seeds and kernels (linseed, pumpkin seeds, nuts, sunflower seeds, etc.), potatoes, topinambur, sago, manioc, tapioca. Please ensure that they do not contain traces of cereals containing gluten.



Tips and tricks

- ◆ Read carefully the list of ingredients of all products – as well as of those you have been using for a long time already. If certain foods contain gluten-containing flour, wheat starch, barley malt or similar components, they have to be omitted.
- ◆ Beware of wheat flour and all the other cereals containing gluten while cooking and baking.
- ◆ As an alternative, you can eat gluten-free special food and use it for cooking and baking. There is an infinite variety of gluten-free foods, such as gluten-free flour and muesli and much more, available in supermarkets and specialist health food stores.
- ◆ Inform your friends and relatives about your coeliac disease.
- ◆ Always ask in a restaurant, if the dishes contain gluten (flour, cereal, wheat starch, etc.).

- ◆ In some cultures, maize, rice and other gluten-free food products are traditionally eaten which are especially appropriate for you.

Fructose malabsorption

Most of the vegetable foodstuffs contain fruit sugar (fructose). Fruit, fruit juices and honey in particular have a high proportion of fructose. Normally, the fructose is absorbed in the small intestine without any problems. In the case of fructose malabsorption, this absorption is limited.

Symptoms

- Nausea
- Abdominal pain and cramping
- Flatulence, wind ("fart")
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation
- Vomiting

Therapy

- Fruit and fruit juices have a high proportion of fructose. Eat and drink them only in small quantities or avoid them completely. Salads and vegetables are better tolerated.
- Dried fruit contain a lot of fructose. It is better to omit them or to consume them just in small amounts.



Tips and tricks

- ◆ Chewing gums with sweeteners (e.g. sorbitol) can worsen the symptoms. Do not chew gum for some days and check whether the symptoms subside.
- ◆ Attention: artificially sweetened drinks and foods contain a lot of fructose. Prefer unsweetened drinks or products sweetened exclusively with normal sugar.
- ◆ Banana is normally well tolerated.
- ◆ Fruit sugar is generally better digested while eaten together with food rich in fat and protein. In combination with grape sugar (glucose), the fructose can also be better absorbed.

Histamine intolerance

Histamine is found in various foods and in particular in processed products. These are products which have undergone a ripening process (cheese, sausages, wine, etc.). Normally, histamine is well absorbed by the body. In the case of histamine intolerance too much histamine enters the human body or the absorption is disturbed.

Symptoms

- Sudden skin redness
- Abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea
- Dizziness, racing heart
- Women: increased menstrual problems
- Runny nose
- Headaches and migraines
- Red eyes

Therapy

Foods rich in histamine should only be eaten in limited quantities or avoided completely. Test whether and how much of certain foods you can tolerate well.



Tips and tricks

- ◆ Avoid alcohol.
- ◆ Eat only fresh meat or fish. Avoid cured and dried meat as well as other preserved meat and fish products. Nitrite curing salts are used when curing meat. They are always indicated on the list of ingredients.
- ◆ Avoid mature cheese. Prefer cream cheese, quark and other fresh dairy products.
- ◆ Fresh or frozen vegetables (except for tomatoes, spinach, aubergine) are well tolerated.
- ◆ Avoid soy sauce and vinegar.

Nutrition advisory service

In the case of food allergy or intolerance, qualified nutritionists will support you. They will help you identify food you do not tolerate, find out what amounts you can tolerate well or find an appropriate alternative.

You will find addresses of certified and experienced nutritionists, specialised in this field, under www.aha.ch.

Insect venom allergy (bee or wasp venom allergy)

Insect venom allergies are mainly triggered by bee and wasp stings. Hornets and bumblebees or ants can also be the trigger for allergies. It is the venom of the insects that causes allergic reactions. The symptoms of an allergic reaction appear frequently within minutes. Midges and horseflies are rarely the cause for allergies. However, their bites swell and become extremely itchy.

Symptoms

A swelling of up to 10 cm in diameter is regarded as a normal reaction to an insect sting. Normally, the swelling will disappear within hours. The itching at the sting site is likely to continue for several days.

Non-allergic reactions

- Swelling at the sting site is less than 10 cm in diameter
- Swelling can continue for several days

Allergic reactions

- Symptoms of an allergic reaction appear frequently within minutes
- Itching on the palms and the soles of the feet, nettle rash, redness
- Swelling on eyes and lips
- Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain
- Shortness of breath, dizziness, weakness
- Unconsciousness

Therapy

- In the case of severe allergic reactions, the doctor will prescribe emergency medication. It should be taken after immediately an insect bite.
- In order to reduce the risk of allergic reactions after an insect bite, a desensitisation (specific immunotherapy) can be carried out (see page 6).



Tips and tricks

- ◆ Do not make any hasty movements in the vicinity of bees and wasps. Walk slowly and without any abrupt movements away from the danger zone.
- ◆ Do not walk barefoot. Bees love clover, many wasps and bumblebees nest on the ground.
- ◆ Do not get near places where there are beehives.
- ◆ Sweat attracts many stinging insects. Take care during sports or while working outdoors.
- ◆ Food attracts wasps. If possible, avoid eating outdoors.
- ◆ Do not leave any left-over food uncovered.
- ◆ Never drink straight out of cans or bottles.
- ◆ Keep your mouth closed when riding a bicycle and do not wear deeply cut T-shirts.
- ◆ Do not use any perfume nor strongly perfumed hairsprays, shampoos or sun and skin creams.
- ◆ Do not wear loose, flappy clothing. In the garden wear gloves and clothes with long sleeves as well as long trousers.

House dust mite allergy

The house dust mite is a harmless arachnid and not visible to the naked eye. The house dust mite requires a warm, moist environment. The mites feed on human and animal skin scales. That's why they live in mattresses, duvets and pillows as well as in carpets and upholstered furniture. In a house dust mite allergy, the symptoms can occur the entire year. In autumn and during winter, heating frequently and closed windows make the air dry. That's why the symptoms might get worse.

Symptoms

- Sneezing
- Blocked nose (especially in the morning on awakening)
- Chronic runny nose
- Red eyes
- Coughing or respiratory problems (especially in indoor rooms)

Therapy

- In order to reduce contact with house dust mites mattresses, pillows and duvets should be placed in mite-proof or anti-mite covers, sometimes known as encasings. They are available in pharmacies and specialist shops. If necessary, the symptoms can be treated with anti-allergic medication. In order to reduce symptoms, a desensitisation (specific immunotherapy) can be carried out (see page 6).

- Room temperature in the bedroom not above 18°C.
- Room temperature in the living room not above 21°C.
- Keep relative air humidity at a maximum of 50% (do not hang up any laundry in the apartment).



Tips and tricks

- ◆ Wash at 60 °C bed linen once a week.
- ◆ Ventilating the rooms for 10 to 15 minutes twice to three times per day.
- ◆ Vacuum at least once a week.
- ◆ Smooth surfaces should be cleaned regularly.
- ◆ Wipe any dust with a soft cloth.
- ◆ No plants in the bedroom.
- ◆ If possible, keep no animals in the apartment. If animals live in your household, take care that they do not go into the bedrooms.
- ◆ Put stuffed toys for 24 hours in the freezing compartment before washing them at 30 up to 60 °C.
- ◆ Remove "dust traps" (e.g. wall hangings, heavy curtains or not washable stuffed toys).
- ◆ At more than 1200 meters above sea level, mites stop reproducing.

In Switzerland, these allergies are the most common ones:



House dust mite



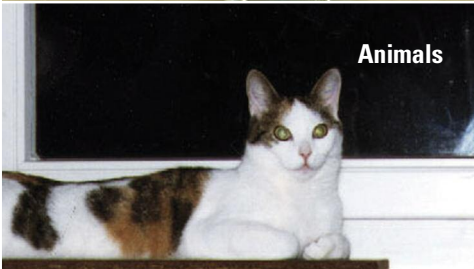
Pollens



Perfume



Insect venom



Animals



Foods



Drugs



Latex

Animal allergy

Every animal can trigger an allergy. In Switzerland, most cases of sensitisation are due to cats, dogs, horses and rodents (e.g. mice and rats). The allergen is mainly secreted in the saliva, in the sebaceous glands and from the skin cells. It is spread by the cat or other animals licking its fur. Allergens from house pets bind to dust particles and, depending on the size of those particles, float around in the air for hours. These small particles are inhaled and can trigger allergic reactions. Animal allergens also stick to clothing. As a result, people can have an allergic reaction without an animal actually being in the vicinity.

Symptoms

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Itchy and red nose
- Itchy and/or watering eyes
- Irritated and/or red eyes
- Respiratory problems in indoor rooms (apartment, office)

Therapy

- Avoidance of the animal causing the allergy is the most effective therapy. If you are allergic to your pet, the animal should be given away.
- Anti-allergic drug therapy is usually required to reduce symptoms.



Tips and tricks

If giving up your pet is out of the question, you should take the following measures:

- ◆ Keep animals outside the bedroom.
- ◆ Wash your hands after any animal contact.
- ◆ Vacuum clean regularly. Clean floors frequently with a damp rag.
- ◆ Clean clothes with a clothes roller.
- ◆ Delegate cleaning of animals' resting and feeding areas to other family members.
- ◆ Remove carpets and other "dust traps" (e.g. heavy curtains or wall hangings).

Latex allergy

Latex is a product from nature. It comes from the natural sap of the rubber tree *Hevea brasiliensis*. Various substances in latex can cause allergic reactions. The symptoms appear when skin or mucous membranes come into contact with latex or when latex particles are inhaled. People working with latex materials are at high risk of a latex allergy (e.g. nursing, cleaning and kitchen staff, etc.).

Symptoms

Direct skin contact leads to:

- Nettle rash
- Itching
- Redness
- Small or larger swollen areas

Inhalation of the latex particles leads to:

- Asthma
- Allergic runny nose
- Itchy red eyes

Therapy

Avoid contact with latex. In the case of allergic reactions, anti-allergic drug therapy can reduce symptoms. If a latex allergy has been diagnosed, you receive an allergy ID card (see page 7). It must be shown at every visit (doctor, dentist, hospital, etc.).



Tips and tricks

- ◆ In everyday life there are many objects containing latex. If you have a latex allergy, the following have to be avoided:
 - Gloves (medical and household gloves)
 - Balloons
 - Condoms
 - Therapeutic strips and strips for the fortification of the muscles
 - Elastic bands in clothes, underwear with stretch effect
 - Non-skid mats in shower bases and bathtubs
 - Cosmetic products
 - Soothers and hot-water bottles
 - Flip flops and swim caps
 - Handles (for example on a handbag or bicycle)
- ◆ There are many latex-free alternatives, e.g. gloves made of vinyl

Drug allergy

Side effects in response to medicines are a common occurrence. Not all are due to allergy. Most commonly, certain antibiotics and some pain-killers trigger allergic reactions. Side effects of medicines should always be reported to the doctor.

Symptoms

- Severe itching on the whole body
- Wheals (nettle rash)
- Swelling
- Blisters on the skin and mucous membranes
- Shortness of breath
- Circulatory collapse

Therapy

Side effects in response to medicines should immediately be reported to the doctor. Afterwards, the drug which can trigger allergic reactions should be strictly avoided. Tell your doctor, pharmacist or dentist each time you visit about your drug allergy and show your allergy ID card (also abroad).



Tips and tricks

- ◆ Keep a diary to track each abnormal reaction after having taken the medication. Show it to your doctor.
- ◆ Be aware of the fact that mixtures and medication sold without prescription can contain the substance triggering allergic reactions. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice concerning alternatives.

Possible symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction



**Skin redness,
itching**



**Vomiting,
diarrhoea**



Shortness of breath



Unconsciousness

Correct application of the prefilled adrenaline syringe



Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is the most severe form of allergic reaction and occurs within a matter of seconds or minutes, rarely hours. It can lead to life-threatening symptoms such as shortness of breath, blood pressure decrease or cardiovascular arrest. It is mostly triggered by bee or wasp stings, or by foods and drugs.

Therapy

In the case of an anaphylactic reaction, measures have to be taken to prevent the sufferer having contact with the allergen (spit out food, remove sting, etc.). If the person carries a prefilled adrenaline syringe, it must be injected immediately. Afterwards, the emergency physician should be called (phone 144). The emergency services will give further instructions.

Anaphylactic reactions can be subdivided into four stages depending on their severity. Treatment is adapted to the stage in question:

Stage	What do I feel?	What can I do?
1	Skin redness, itching (especially on the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet), itching nose, sneezing, runny nose, itchy and watery eyes, headaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Take medication out of the emergency set– Observe if the pulse frequency is changing, e.g. gets faster
2	Blood pressure and pulse changes, shortness of breath, urge to defecate or urinate, feelings of anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Use the prefilled adrenaline syringe– Call emergency physician: phone 144– Inhale asthma emergency spray
3	Blood pressure decrease, looking pale, severe shortness of breath, unconsciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Use the prefilled adrenaline syringe– Call emergency physician: phone 144– Inhale asthma emergency spray
4	Respiratory/cardiovascular arrest	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Artificial respiration– Cardiac massage

Prevent allergies

The tendency to develop allergies is genetically inherited. However, there are ways to prevent them from developing:

Diet during pregnancy and while breast-feeding

Have a healthy, balanced, wholesome meal according to the Swiss food pyramid. Avoiding certain foods during pregnancy and while breast-feeding is neither advantageous for the mother nor the baby.

Breast-feeding

A diet of mother's milk for the first four months is ideal for the baby, because mother's milk provides optimum nutrition for growth and development. It also supports the child's immune system. If breast-feeding is impossible, a hypoallergenic milk (HA milk) is recommended. At the age of five months, move your baby on to normal follow-on milk.

Good to know

Hypoallergenic milk (HA milk) is more appropriate for babies with allergies than normal infant formula, because certain components are processed. Ask your pharmacist for this type of product.

Start from the fifth month onwards, at the latest after the sixth month, with porridge meals. Introduce new food at intervals of three to four days. The number of porridge meals should slowly be increased so that

your baby eats three to four meals per day until the end of the first year of life. Breast-milk as a complement to porridge meals is possible and useful beyond the first year of age.

The following foods are appropriate for porridge meals:

- Vegetables, potatoes
- Fruits
- Cereals
- Yoghurt and milk can be used in small quantities for porridge meals from the seventh month on
- In addition: meat, eggs, fish
- Nuts and peanuts are not appropriate, because they can be swallowed

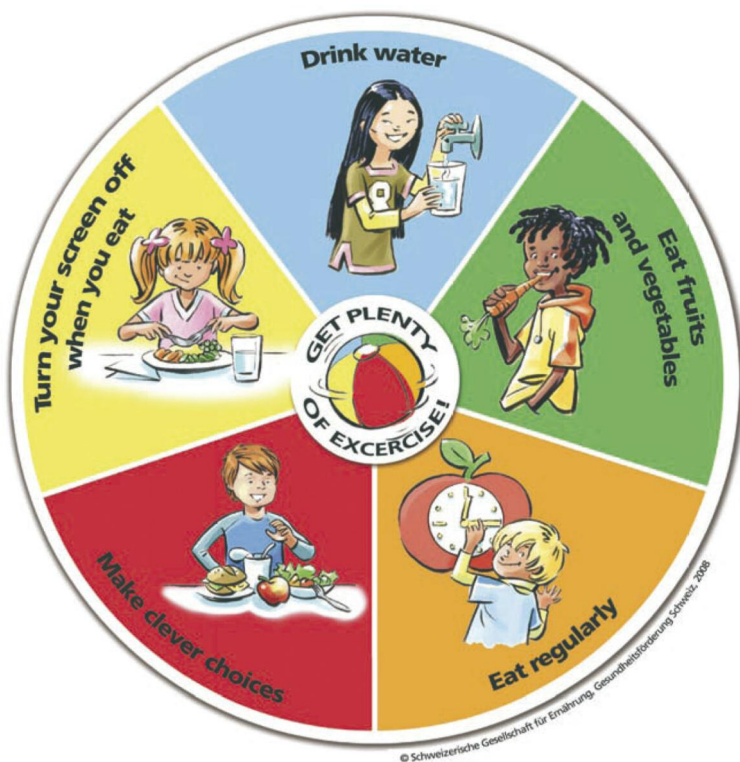
If you are still unsure about which is the best moment to start with porridge meals or their preparation, contact a qualified specialist (e.g. mothers and fathers advice centre, nutritional advisers, paediatrician).

Young child's nutrition from the second year of life

From the second year of life, children should sit at the table and eat everything. In this phase, children learn to eat independently and find out what they like and what they dislike. Children often have to taste a certain dish 10 to 15 times to get used to its taste. The innate sensation of hunger and sense of satiety are intact. A mealtime rhythm with three main dishes and two snacks is advisable.

The Nutritional Disk for Children shows at a glance what comprises a healthy diet for children, 5-12 years old:

- **Drink water:** water is the cheapest and qualitatively best thirst-quencher. Offer water at every meal and during the day provide water that is easily reachable for your children.
- **Eat regularly:** at an early stage, let your child get used to a clear mealtime rhythm.
- **Eat fruit and vegetables:** discover, together with your child, the colourful diversity of fruit and vegetables. They, preferably in bite-sized pieces, taste good with main meals and are also a great snack for in between meals.
- **Make clever choices when it comes to food and drink:** with a balanced and varied diet, the children's daily nutrient need is thus optimally covered. Avoid special "childrens' food". They are expensive and high in fat, salt and sugar and contain additives.
- **Turn your screen off when you eat:** use your position as a role model and enjoy your meal without TV, smartphones and tablets. Eating together is a special event for your child and promotes healthy eating.



Vaccination

According to the present status of medical knowledge, vaccination does not increase the risk of allergies. Your children can, just as all other children, be vaccinated according to the vaccination recommendations.

Body weight

A healthy body weight minimizes the risk of asthma or reduces the severity of pre-existing asthma. It is presumed that a normal body weight can also reduce the risk of allergies. It is therefore important that obesity is treated in infancy and early childhood with the support of qualified staff (e.g. mothers and fathers advice centre, nutritional advisers, paediatrician) and that a healthy lifestyle is promoted.

Tobacco smoke

Maternal smoking during pregnancy or exposure to second-hand smoke increases the risk of allergies for the unborn child. Additional risks incurred when exposed to second-hand smoke continue for the baby. The mother and the father should be advised on the importance of stopping smoking during pregnancy. The child should also grow up in a smoke-free environment, which means that parents, other relatives and guests should not smoke in the apartment.

Domestic animals

There is no reason why children and adults with no risk of allergies should not keep pets. Whether and to what degree domestic animals influence the risk in children with risks of allergies has not yet been clarified definitively. However, they should not have domestic cats.

Certified products for people affected

Products and services which are awarded the Swiss Allergy Label are particularly suitable for people with allergies and intolerances. These products were selected and certified independently and in accordance with strict guidelines. Please refer to the website of Swiss Allergy Service where you can find several certified food products, various cosmetic products or diverse mite-proof or anti-mite covers (encasings) for mattresses, pillows and duvets as well as cleaning tools and chemical cleaning agents.



www.swiss-allergy-service.ch

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Thank you very much!

Bringing quality to life

aha! Swiss Allergy Centre is an independent, non-profit foundation, recognized by ZEWÖ and ISO-certified focusing on the needs and interests of allergy sufferers as well as helping them find better quality of life by means of active prevention.

The most important services:

- Personal advice from aha!infoline: 031 359 90 50
- Free brochures on the subject of allergies
- A wide range of information under www.aha.ch
- Holiday camp and training for children suffering from allergies, asthma, neurodermitis and intolerances
- Training in neurodermitis for parents and children
- Training in allergy and asthma for adults
- Training in anaphylaxis
- Training for professionals in different disciplines
- Thematic information and prevention campaigns

A donation will enable us to expand important services for sufferers as well as to introduce new services.

Thank you very much for your support.

Donate online under www.aha.ch.

Donate with payment slip

Postal account 30-11220-0

aha! Swiss Allergy Centre, Scheibenstrasse 20, 3014 Bern

Payment slips can also be ordered by phone or e-mail (phone 031 359 90 00, info@aha.ch)

or

Send an SMS to **488**

with the keyword **aha allergie**

aha! Swiss Allergy Centre

Scheibenstrasse 20

3014 Bern

aha!infoline 031 359 90 50

info@aha.ch

www.aha.ch

