

### What is Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month?

Each year, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) declares May National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month. It's a perfect time of year to educate yourself, family, friends, co-workers, and others about these diseases.

### What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease that causes your airways to become inflamed, making it hard to breathe. There is no cure for asthma. The best way to manage asthma is to avoid triggers, take medications to prevent symptoms, and prepare to treat asthma episodes if they occur. Asthma may lead to a medical emergency. It is important to know the signs of a severe asthma attack. Common asthma symptoms include coughing, shortness of breath, wheezing, and chest tightness.

### What are allergies?

An allergy occurs when the body's immune system sees a substance as harmful and overreacts to it. The substances that cause allergic reactions are *allergens*. When someone has allergies, their immune system has antibodies that respond to allergens. The symptoms that result of an allergic reaction.

The most common allergy symptoms – such as watery eyes, runny nose, sneezing, and a rash or hives – can simply make you uncomfortable. Other more serious symptoms, like trouble breathing and swelling in your mouth or throat, may be a life-threatening reaction called *anaphylaxis*.

### Mobile apps

- [AsthmaMD](#)
- [Family Allergy & Asthma](#)
- [Pollen.com](#)
- [WebMD Allergy](#)

### Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Martin Hickey, MD**, our Chief Executive Officer.

If you have asthma, an asthma attack can happen when you are exposed to “triggers.” Your triggers can be very different from those of someone else with asthma. Know your triggers and learn how to avoid them. Some of the most common triggers for asthma are:

- Tobacco smoke
- Dust mites
- Outdoor air pollution
- Pets
- Mold
- Cockroach allergen

Doctors diagnose allergies in three steps: 1) review your personal and medical history, 2) give you a physical exam, and 3) do tests to identify the following allergens: food, drug (medication), insects, latex, mold, pet, and pollen.

There is no cure for asthma and allergies, and many deaths are preventable with proper treatment and care. Talk to your provider if you experience any symptoms and triggers. He or she can help you control, manage, and prevent your or your loved ones' asthma and allergies.

### Additional resources

- [Asthma – A.D.A.M. Staying Healthy Resource](#)
- [Allergy – A.D.A.M. Staying Healthy Resource](#)
- [Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America](#)