

Medical Center
ENT Associates of Houston

Allergy Resource Guide

Allergy Testing-Overview

Allergy problems are as varied as the individuals experiencing them. Two groups of substances cause the development of sensitivities and their symptoms. The first consists of airborne factors called “INHALANTS”, which enter the body through the process of breathing. The second group of substances enters the body by ingestion and is called “FOODS”. All substances capable of producing allergies are referred to as “ALLERGENS”. An “ANTIGEN” is an extract of a specific allergen used to desensitize a patient’s allergic response.

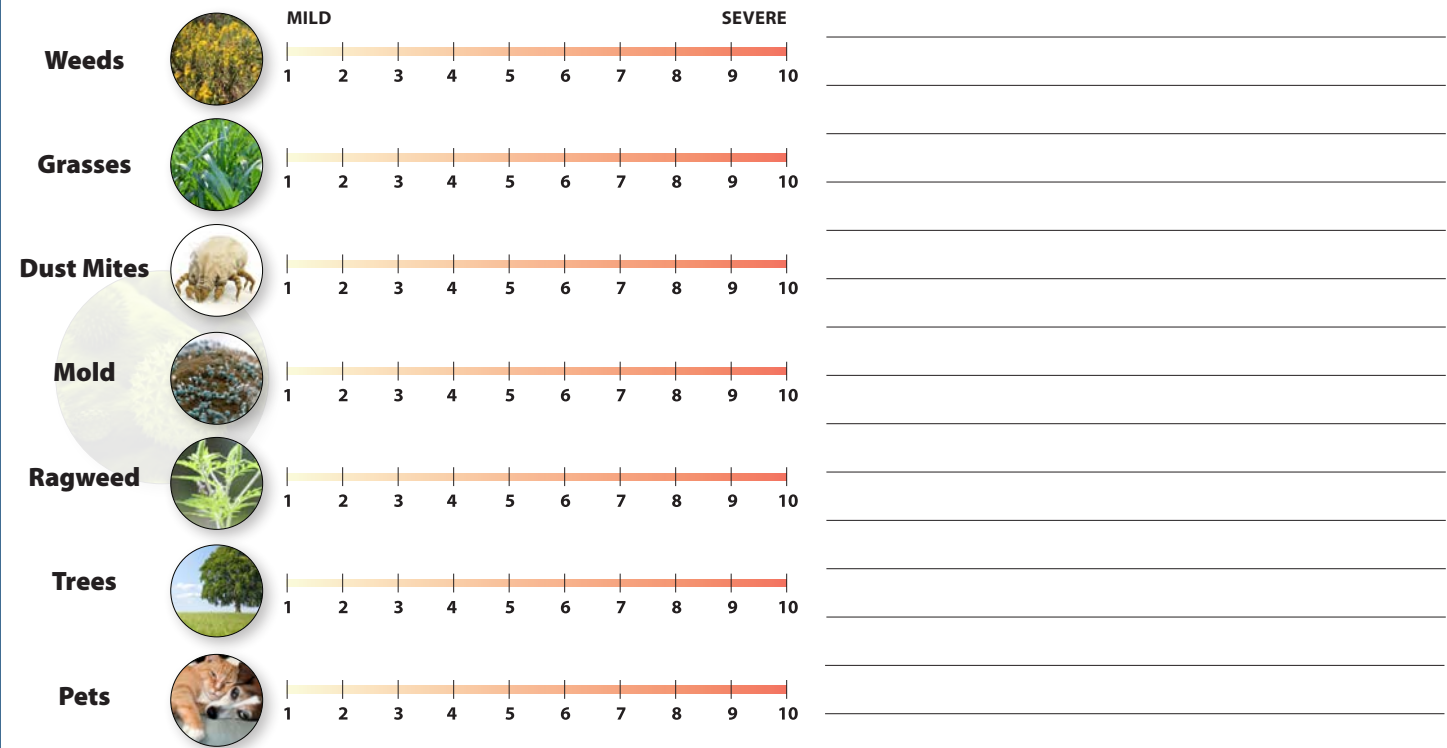
We are testing you to determine what you are allergic to and your degree of sensitivity to allergens. This is extremely important for getting prompt seasonal relief. Your treatments will be based on your degree of sensitivity. The specific degree of sensitivity normally changes with seasons as the airborne allergens change. Therefore, at this time, you may exhibit specific sensitivity responses to the various pollens of trees, weeds, grass, etc. that may or may not be present in the air at the time of testing.

There are three main goals of inhalant allergy management:

- 1. **Identify antigens through testing sensitivity levels.**
- 2. **Remove or avoid antigens by understanding and managing your environment.**
- 3. **Use immunotherapy to modulate the immune system (desensitization).**



ALLERGY TESTING WORKUP



You may contact your insurance carrier to review what is covered by allergy treatment. Please be aware that every carrier is different and there are different plans within each carrier. Your carrier will be able to specifically address any fees that you will be responsible for including co-payments, co-insurance, and deductibles.

ALLERGY TESTING – AFTER CARE INSTRUCTIONS

The area from allergy testing may remain swollen for 1-2 weeks. It is normal to have slight itching, redness and swelling after allergy testing is completed. You may do the following to minimize the time frame of your symptoms:

- 1. Cleanse the area with soap and water and then apply Benadryl cream / Hydrocortisone cream to the tested area as needed
- 2. Take over the counter antihistamines such as Zyrtec / Benadryl / Claritin / Allegra as directed.
- 3. Apply an ice pack to the area for 5-10 minutes every 2-4 hours as needed.
- 4. Call our office at (713) 795-0111 if your symptoms increase or worsen.

Allergy Injections

Now that testing has established the allergens your body reacts to, we can begin developing a plan to help you deal with them. The most effective treatment for inhalant allergies combines removal and avoidance strategies with immunotherapy. The easiest and quickest relief from your allergies will come from removing or avoiding the allergens causing your symptoms. The remainder of this guide will educate you about where allergens may be hiding in everyday items, how to mitigate allergens in your home, what each category of allergens contains, how to remove allergens from your environment and how your diet can affect your symptoms.



While avoidance and mitigation are essential tools, the only way to provide your body with greater resistance against troubling allergens is through a process of introducing a personalized serum, which is called immunotherapy. The serum is customized to your specific needs and administered in increasing doses by injection or oral administration to gradually desensitize your system to the allergens your body does not tolerate well.

ALLERGY INJECTIONS - OVERVIEW

Simply put, allergy injections start out relatively weak and gradually escalate to a full - strength dose. The starting point is determined by your individual sensitivity to the specific allergen being administered. Properly administered injections cause your body to react slightly to deal with the irritant but not enough to turn into a systemic reaction. This process gradually builds your ability to tolerate the allergen. The outline below provides a description of how your immunotherapy will progress through treatment.

- 1. Your first four doses are considered your “build-up” phase. During this time, you will be taking four doses of allergy serum that should be administered every three to four days.
- 2. When all antigens in the serum are at full strength, you are considered to be at “maintenance” phase.
- 3. During “maintenance” phase, your injections should be administered once weekly for 1 year.
- 4. After 1 year of immunotherapy treatment, you should repeat your Allergy Testing to reevaluate your allergy sensitivities and review the results with your doctor. You may then move your injections to once every two weeks based upon your doctor’s evaluation.

SUCCESSFUL ALLERGY TREATMENT REQUIRES A MINIMUM THREE-YEAR COMMITMENT.

Silk moth	Dust from insect wings; cellulose (skeletal)
Cat hair	Used for earmuffs, slippers, rug pads, imitation furs, gloves, toy animals, etc <i>Cat dander is so buoyant that even with thorough cleaning, the hairs will still float in the air.</i>
Dog hair	Used in rug pads and Chinese rugs <i>Shorthaired dogs produce more dander. When dog saliva dries on the floor or rug it becomes an allergen.</i>
Feathers	Used in pillows, eiderdown comforters, sleeping bags, mattresses, animal feed and fertilizers; birds, nests that are located outside windows or in attics
Horse hair	Used in many rug pads, antique furniture, paintbrushes, etc <i>Sensitive patients should avoid exposure to horses, stables, riding areas and showrooms.</i>
Orris root	Extracted as oil or powder from several varieties of irises; has a faint violet odor; is widely used in cosmetic powders, sachets, bath salts, tooth powders and toiletries. <i>Cosmetics are never truly non-allergenic, but many that make the make that claim are free of orris root. A good rule to follow is to use unscented forms of cosmetics.</i>
Pyrethrum	Derived from a plant belonging to the chrysanthemum family; it is an ingredient in many insecticides, mothballs and cut flowers; a relative of ragweed
Rabbit hair	Used for gloves, coats, collars, muffs and coat linings

DUST MITES

House dust mites are microscopic spider-like arthropods that are normal inhabitants in homes. They feed on human skin cells and are found in large numbers in mattresses and bed sheets. They can also be found in upholstered furniture, rugs, pillows and stuffed toys. The mite bodies range from 10–40 microns in size. Due to their small size, the fecal pellets can be a major cause of bronchial asthma. Household mites increase in numbers (many thousands per grams of dust) during periods of high (60–75%) relative humidity.

Keys to minimizing and managing impact of dust mites:

- 1. Enclose mattress, box springs and pillows in hypoallergenic covers.
- 2. Wash bedding in hot water weekly, including mattress pads.
- 3. Wipe vinyl mattress cover with damp cloth before making the bed.
- 4. Do not use fans in bedrooms (including ceiling fans).
- 5. Do not store anything under the bed or in the bedroom.
- 6. Keep closet doors closed.
- 7. Do not store winter clothes with summer clothes.
- 8. Eliminate clothes that have not been used in two years.
- 9. Eliminate dust catchers (curtains, stuffed animals, etc.).
- 10. Vacuum thoroughly at least once a week.
- 11. Change vacuum cleaner bags frequently.
- 12. Damp-mop hardwood floors.
- 13. Dust furniture frequently.
- 14. Install high-efficiency (HEPA) central heating/air conditioning filters.
- 15. Clean heater and air conditioner filters monthly.

Avoid an allergen overload!!

For example, if you are sensitive to molds and grasses, DO NOT cut the grass, come inside for a sandwich and then go to get an allergy shot. YOU HAVE NOW INHALED, INGESTED AND INJECTED THE ALLERGENIC SUBSTANCE. This is an allergen overload. You may experience adverse reactions.



POLLEN (TREES, GRASSES, WEEDS)

Pollen allergies are usually seasonal. Your allergic response may change if you are particularly susceptible to the pollens produced in a certain season. Only seed-bearing plants produce pollen. Not all pollens are allergenic. Ornamental plants produce heavy waxy pollen that is toxic. Shifts in the intensity or direction of the wind will change your degree of sensitivity. Staying indoors may minimize your symptoms.

Certain pollens are present year round (particularly grasses). This group includes ragweed and the grasses that are the leading cause of seasonal rhinitis (hay fever). Certain trees, such as cedars, pollinate in the winter. Some elm and oak trees pollinate during the fall and ragweed season. Although they are mainly outdoor airborne allergens, pollen grains can be transported into the home through open windows and doors.

Evenings are the worst time for pollen sufferers because during the day, heat carries pollen into the air. Cooler evenings return these allergens to the ground causing allergic symptoms.

Key prevention strategies for pollen allergies:

- Wear a face mask outdoors.
- Avoid outdoor activities during high pollen times.
- Keep windows closed.
- Use central heat and air conditioning.

Pollen Seasons	TREES	January–May
	GRASSES	March–October
	WEEDS	June–October



PETS (EPIDERMAL)

Any non-human animal dander can sensitize an allergic individual. Most common sources are cats, dogs and the furs and feathers used in clothing and stuffed materials. It is extremely difficult to remove dander from a home with carpeting, upholstered furniture and draperies.

Four strategies to reduce the impact of animal dander:

- 1. Do not let pets sleep in the bedroom.
- 2. Bathe household pets regularly.
- 3. Remove feather pillows and comforters from your home..
- 4. Hire a groomer or brush pets outdoors.

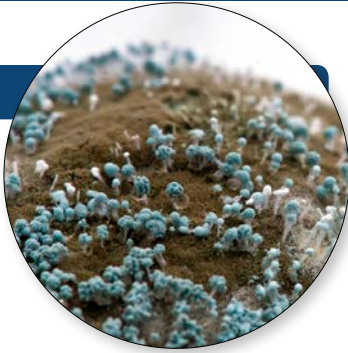


MOLDS

Mold spores are another group of airborne allergens that cause many problems. Molds (or fungi) are simple plants lacking stems, roots, leaves and chlorophyll. They do not require sunlight for growth and thrive in almost every environment. Many fungi relevant to allergies reproduce using spores, which are dispersed by wind, water or insects. Spoiled food, garbage containers, shower curtains, sinks, cool mist vaporizers, humidifiers, windowsills, damp basements and soiled upholstery are common habitats for molds. Maintaining proper humidity levels is vital to controlling mold in the home. High humidity promotes growth of dust mites and molds. Low humidity dries the bronchial passages and nose, causing discomfort. Molds found in the home are causes of ongoing allergy symptoms. You will be tested for mold spores common to your area and treated specifically for the ones that cause sensitivity. Molds are a factor year-round and will be included in your treatments each week if you are allergic to them.

The impact of mold on your health and lifestyle can be minimized by utilizing the following mold control strategies:

- Use exhaust fans to reduce excess humidity in the house. Dry, cool air and sunlight are effective in reducing mold growth.
- Buy dust-proof covers for mattresses, box springs and pillows.
- Remove moldy items such as shoes, luggage, books, plants, wallpaper and carpet.
- Check bathroom walls, floors and shower curtains for mold growth. Dry damp bathroom walls after showers.
- Use Aqueous Zephiran (obtained at drugstores) in a 17% solution for cleaning to protect against mold. Dilute one ounce of concentrate with one gallon of water.
- Sprinkle Borax in damp areas.
- Run one cup of vinegar through a regular cycle on your dishwasher every 4–6 weeks.
- Clean refrigerators periodically with a vinegar solution.
- Check windows, air conditioners, vaporizers, humidifiers, refrigerator rubber gaskets and drip pans for mold growth.
- Remove houseplants, especially from the bedroom and adjoining bathroom, to more infrequently used areas of the home.
- Vent clothes dryer to the outside of the house.
- Avoid leaving damp clothes in the washing machine.
- Use Borax in the laundry to reduce mold growth.
- Avoid raking damp leaves.
- Wear a face mask while performing yard work.
- Don't let shrubs, vines, leaves and debris accumulate near exterior walls of the home.
- Direct water away from the house using splash blocks or drainage pipes.
- When building a new home, put heavy polyethylene under basement foundation and outside foundation walls.
- Install a dehumidifier to cross-ventilate and heat basement areas.
- Avoid sleeping beneath ceiling fans or in underground rooms.
- Maintain humidity around 40–50% in the house.



CHEMICALS

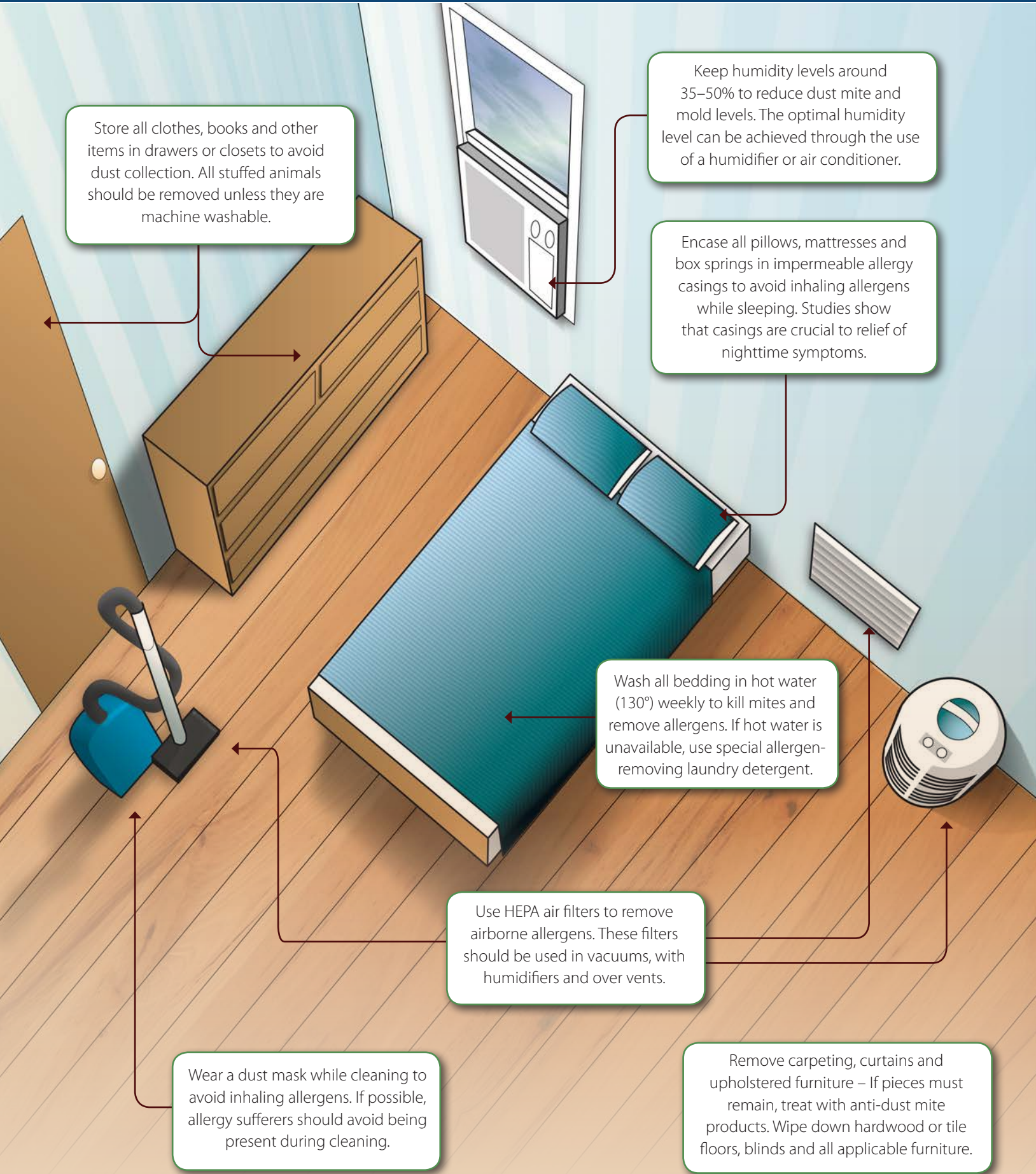
For those of you who are allergic to cosmetics, it's important to know there are no truly non-allergenic cosmetics available. There are, however, certain cosmetics that are highly allergenic and should be avoided. We will be happy to supply the names of these on request. Hypoallergenic cosmetics we recommend are AllerCream, Merle Norman, Clinique and Almay. Merle Norman is free of animal and vegetable fibers, orris root and rice powders.

You may be sensitive to perfumes, colognes and personal care products containing fragrances, lanolin, lacquer or chemicals. Avoidance of these products may be beneficial.

Three effective strategies for chemical management:

- 1. Wash all new clothing prior to wearing it.
- 2. Use fragrance-free products as often as possible.
- 3. Air out dry-cleaned clothes before placing in closet.





ROTARY DIVERSIFIED DIET

Those with allergies need to learn to eat a diet that will control allergic symptoms and prevent the onset of new sensitivities. Approximately 50% of people with inhalant allergies are also allergic to some foods. If you suspect food allergies, a good way to start pinpointing them is to keep a food diary for two weeks.

In general, foods eaten every day are more likely to cause difficulty than those eaten infrequently. It is well documented that avoiding a food leads to “tolerance” of it, and that repetitive consumption of a particular food increases “sensitivity” to it. Patients with allergies must learn to “rotate” foods from day to day and to eat a wide variety of different foods. Some simple guidelines for implementing these principles are:

1. Eat as many different fruits as you wish, but do not eat the same fruit more than once a day. Do not eat that fruit again for three days. (Example: Monday–apple, pear; Tuesday–peach, grapes; Wednesday–grapefruit, banana; Thursday–apple, pear)
2. Eat as many different vegetables as you wish, but do not eat the same vegetable more than once a day. Do not eat that vegetable again for three days.
3. Eat meat one or two times per day, but do not eat the same meat twice per day. (Example: if bacon is eaten for breakfast, do not have pork chops for dinner.) Do not eat those same meats the next day. Eat that particular meat only every other day.
4. Eat fish of some type every seven days. Do not always use tuna as your fish selection.
5. Consume coffee or tea once per day if you have not been told to omit it or that you are allergic to it.
6. Do not eat a whole egg more than three times per week and do not use at all if you are allergic to egg.
7. Eat dessert once per day, preferably at lunchtime.
8. Include rice and dried beans in your diet at least once per week.
9. Drink at least eight glasses of water per day. Drink other fluids as needed.
10. Do not consume sweetened juices or fruit drinks. Use only natural juices.
11. Do not eat any food that you’re allergic to or that you have been instructed to eliminate.

FOODS TO WATCH

Processed and prepackaged foods, such as those on the list below, often contain few nutrients, excessive calories and an abundance of less-than-desirable ingredients.

Popcorn	Nuts	Peanut butter
Corn chips	Potato chips	Chocolate
Soda	Kool-Aid	Jell-O
Popsicles	Spices	Herbs
Mustard	Ketchup	Pizza
Spaghetti sauce	Lunch meat	Hot dogs
Gum	Candy	Snack wafers

These foods are acceptable if eaten on occasion; however, if these foods comprise the bulk of your diet, they should be completely eliminated. You should eat fresh fruits and vegetables, properly prepared meals and other nutritious food to remain healthy!

PROVEN CROSS-REACTING FOODS

People with pollen allergies may experience symptoms when they eat certain fruits, vegetables, spices and nuts. This is called a cross-reaction. The following chart provides guidance on some common allergens, their peak seasons and the foods where cross-reaction may occur.

Season	Allergen	Food
January–February	Cedar	Beef, baker’s yeast, brewer’s yeast
Early spring and fall	Elm	Milk
Early to late spring	Pecan	Corn, bananas
	Sycamore	Apple, lettuce, chickpeas, hazelnuts, corn, peaches, peanuts
April–August	Plantain	Bananas
Late spring to early summer	Oak	Eggs
April until frost	Grass	Legumes (butter beans, lima beans, peas, peanuts, anything in a pod) Grains (breads, cereals, pasta, rice, corn, oranges)
August until frost	Ragweed	Milk, melons, bananas, apples, wheat, mint, tomatoes, chamomile, sunflower seeds, cucumbers
	Pigweed	Pork
All Year (especially when it’s 40–70 degrees)	Molds	Cheese, yogurt, yeast, mushrooms, vinegar products, condiments, alcoholic beverages, etc.
	Latex	Avocados, bananas, chestnuts, kiwis, melons, papayas



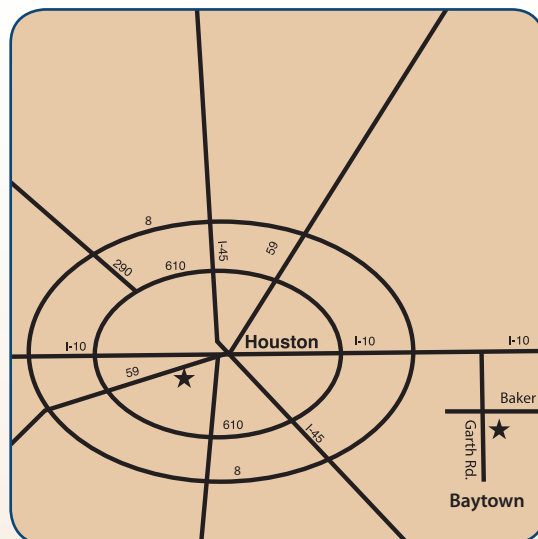
About Medical Center ENT Associates of Houston

Our Mission

Our goal is to provide excellent care to patients with problems of the ears, nose and throat (ENT). We care for patients of any age. Our staff is well trained, personable and professional. We strive to provide a warm, comfortable atmosphere in our practice for the benefit of our patients.

Practice Profile

Our physicians are all certified by the American Board of Otolaryngology and are members of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. Many have pursued training beyond residency in order to refine diagnostic and treatment abilities. They understand the disabling effects ENT and allergy conditions can have on your quality of life, and are committed to providing solutions for long-term relief.



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