

Alabama Asthma, Allergy & Immunology Center, P.C.

When Should I See an Allergist?

An allergist is a physician who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of allergic rhinitis (hay fever), asthma and other allergic diseases (insect sting allergy, food allergy, drug allergy, hives, eczema, anaphylaxis). The allergist has special training to identify the factors that trigger allergic diseases, and help patients to prevent or treat these conditions. After earning a medical degree, the allergist completes a three-year residency training program in either internal medicine or pediatrics, followed by a two- or three-year program of study in the field of allergy and immunology. After passing a qualifying examination, the doctor becomes an allergist certified by the American Board of Allergy and Immunology.

How an Allergist Can Help

Effective control of allergic disease requires planning, skill and patience. The allergist, with his or her specialized training and expertise in evaluation and management, can develop a treatment plan for your individual condition. The goal will be to enable you to lead a life that is normal and symptom-free as possible.

Allergy Testing

The allergist will usually perform skin tests to determine what allergens are involved.

Environmental control

The most effective approach to treating allergic symptoms is to avoid the factors that trigger the condition in the first place. Even when it is not possible to avoid allergens, an allergist can design strategies for reducing exposure and preventing symptoms.

Prescription Medications

Many new and effective medications are available to treat allergic diseases.

Immunotherapy (Allergy Shots)

In this treatment, patients are injected over the course of time with gradually increasing doses of the substances to which they are allergic. In many cases, the body's reaction to the substance becomes less pronounced over time.

You Should See an Allergist if:

- Your nasal allergies are causing secondary symptoms such as chronic sinus infections, nasal congestion or difficulty breathing.
- You experience hay fever or other allergy symptoms several months out of the year.
- Antihistamines and other over-the-counter medications do not control your allergy symptoms or create unacceptable side effects, such as drowsiness.
- Your allergic disease is interfering with your ability to carry on day-to-day activities.
- Your allergy symptoms decrease the quality of life.
- You are experiencing warning signs of asthma such as:
1. You often wheeze or cough, especially at night or after exercise.
2. You have previously been diagnosed with asthma, but despite treatment, you have frequent acute asthma attacks.