



## Allergies

### How the individual allergens add up to symptoms

Your doctor has ordered an ImmunoCAP<sup>®</sup> allergy blood test to help determine if allergies are contributing to your symptoms, and if so, which specific allergens trigger those symptoms. The ImmunoCAP allergy blood test measures specific IgE in your blood. Specific IgE is a chemical that is produced by the body when a person has an allergy. ImmunoCAP will test for the IgE specific to allergens your doctor suspects might be affecting you. If you are allergic, ImmunoCAP will identify exactly what allergens are contributing to your symptoms.

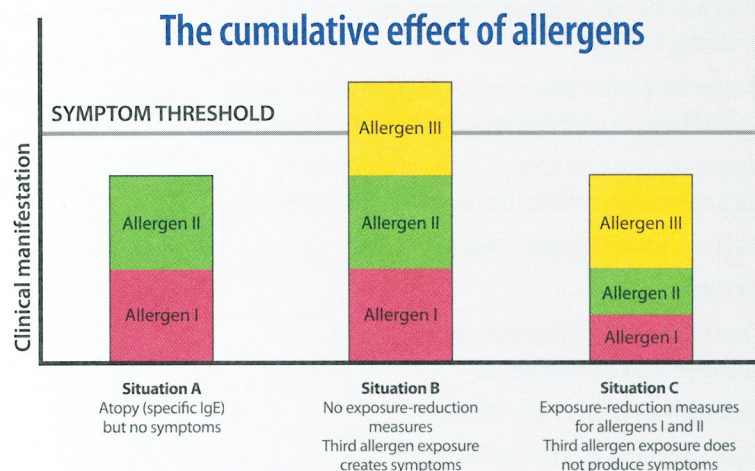
### What's an allergy?

An allergy is a heightened reaction (known as sensitivity) to a substance or substances (allergens) that are normally harmless. Allergens in the air—like pollen, mold, and cat or dog dander—can trigger a variety of symptoms, including sneezing, runny nose, or itchy/watery eyes. Allergens can also trigger an asthma attack in someone with asthma and allergies (allergic asthma).

### Allergens add up!

Although a few patients are allergic to just one substance (for example, cat dander or ragweed) and react whenever they come near that animal or plant, most patients are sensitive to more than one thing.<sup>1</sup> For these patients, symptoms appear only when they are exposed to two or more allergic triggers at once.<sup>2</sup> In these cases the effects are cumulative.

This chart shows how patients with multiple allergic sensitivities may not have symptoms until their total exposure to allergens pushes them over the symptom threshold. By reducing exposure to one or more allergens, these patients can help to reduce their symptoms.



### Reducing exposure to reduce symptoms

A plan to limit your exposure to allergic triggers can help reduce your symptoms.<sup>2</sup> In addition, experts believe that medical treatments and immunotherapy are more effective if patients also decrease their exposure to allergens.<sup>3</sup> However, it is crucial to know exactly what you are allergic to. The tips on the back of this sheet will help you limit your exposure to common airborne allergens. Talk with your doctor about which allergic triggers you have, and which tips to follow, based on the results of your ImmunoCAP allergy blood test.

## You are allergic to: pollens

Pollens are the tiny airborne particles given off by trees, weeds, and grasses for the purpose of fertilization and reproduction. Some pollens circulate only at certain times of the year, while others are present nearly year round. The following tips can help you any time of the year.

- Stay indoors when pollen counts are high for pollens you are allergic to. Check reports for pollen count forecasts or log on to [www.pollen.com/Pollen.com.asp](http://www.pollen.com/Pollen.com.asp) to obtain updated pollen counts
- Have someone else do your yard work, or wear a micro-fiber facemask when digging in the dirt
- At home and when driving, keep windows closed and when possible use an air conditioner on recirculate
- Use high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters for furnace and vacuum cleaners
- Remove work clothes outdoors after working outside and carry them in a bag to the washing machine.
- Shower after working outside—wash hair, eyes, and eyelashes
- Take allergy medicines 30 minutes before going outdoors
- Try a sport that takes place away from allergy triggers—stay away from highways or industrial plants; exhaust and air pollution make symptoms worse
- When exercising, breathe through your nose

## You are allergic to: mold spores

Molds live both indoors and outdoors. They give off spores that can cause allergic reactions throughout the year. The following steps can help you avoid exposure to outdoor mold.

- Avoid barns, greenhouses, sleeping bags, summer cottages, and walking through uncut fields
- Avoid mowing grass, handling mulch or compost, raking leaves, or working with hay
- Avoid using fans that draw in outside air; when possible, use an air conditioner on recirculate and keep windows and doors closed
- If you have a basement or live in an area of high humidity, use a dehumidifier to reduce the humidity in your home
- Wash evaporative (“swamp”) coolers
- Fix water leaks
- Clean furnace filters, refrigerator, and dehumidifier (and clean drip pans with bleach)
- Thoroughly dry clothes before storing
- Clean moldy areas with fungicide or bleach

## You are allergic to: animal dander

Allergy to an animal (such as a cat or dog) is actually a sensitivity to the pet’s skin flakes and fur. The following tips can help you limit your exposure to these allergens.

- If you own a furry pet, try to keep it outdoors or find it a new home
- Confine the pet to a room with a polished floor and wipeable furniture
- Use high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters and vacuum cleaners
- Wash your pet weekly in warm water and soap

## You are allergic to: house dust mites

Dust mites are invisible creatures that live in house dust and feed on dead skin flakes. Most tips to handle dust mites involve regular cleaning of the home and furnishings (including curtains and bedding).

- Keep house clean by vacuuming and reducing clutter
- Wash bedding weekly in 130°F hot water
- Wear an appropriate mask while cleaning and avoid area 20 minutes after cleaning
- Change furnace and air conditioner filters regularly
- Encase mattresses, pillows, and box springs in allergen-proof coverings
- If you have a basement or live in an area of high humidity, use a dehumidifier to reduce the humidity in your home

## You are allergic to: cockroaches

Cockroach saliva, fecal material, and shed skins are the main sensitizers for humans. The following tips are meant to aid in cockroach prevention and eradication. Thorough cleaning is required after extermination.

- Place bait traps, or call a professional exterminator to eliminate cockroaches
- Wash dishes, vacuum, keep food and garbage in closed containers, and take out garbage regularly
- Don’t store paper bags, newspapers, or cardboard boxes in your home
- Seal plumbing openings, cracks, and crevices

### References

1. Arbes SJ Jr, et al. *J Allergy Clin Immunol.* 2005;116:377-383. 2. Wickman M. *Allergy.* 2005;60 (suppl 79):14-18. 3. Platt-Mills TAE, et al. *J Allergy Clin Immunol.* 2000;106:787-804.

[www.isitallergy.com](http://www.isitallergy.com)

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