

Allergies



Allergic disorders are very common in Australia with approximately 4.1 million Australians¹ having at least one allergy. There are many different types of allergies, presenting with a variety of symptoms. Fortunately, diagnosis and treatment options are available for most allergies.

What is an allergy?

An allergy is an overreaction of a person's immune system to substances that are harmless for most people. These substances are known as allergens and can cause a variety of symptoms.

Common sources of allergens include:

- **Animal dander:**
Such as the hair and secretions of pets like cats and dogs.
- **Food:**
Such as eggs, fish, crustaceans, peanuts, tree nuts (for example, almonds, cashews, pecans and walnuts), milk, soy and sesame products.
- **Arthropods:**
Such as house dust mites, and the venom from bees and wasps.
- **Medicines:**
Including prescription drugs (such as penicillin), over-the-counter medicines (such as aspirin) and herbal preparations.
- **Moulds:**
Such as mildew and mould spores.
- **Plants:**
Pollen from grasses, weeds and trees.



What are symptoms of an allergy?

The most common allergic conditions are hay fever (allergic rhinitis/conjunctivitis), eczema, food allergies and asthma¹. Allergies can cause a variety of symptoms, including:

Abdominal	Cramping, vomiting and diarrhoea after eating certain foods
Anaphylaxis	A potentially life threatening allergic reaction of rapid onset
Eyes	Itching, redness, swelling, tearing, watery eyes
Lungs	Asthmatic symptoms such as shortness of breath, wheezing, tightness in the chest, coughing
Nose	Itching, congestion, sneezing, postnasal drip
Skin	Hives or itchy welts, itching or eczema

1. The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy, (2007). The Economic Impact of Allergic Disease in Australia: Not To Be Sneezed At [online]. Available: <http://www.allergy.org.au/content/view/327/274> [accessed

Do allergy tests attract a Medicare rebate?

You may be eligible to receive a Medicare rebate for up to four tests per year, subject to Medicare guidelines and criteria. Abbott Pathology offers testing for up to four allergens or allergen groups each time.

For patients who are willing to pay a gap fee we are able to provide more extensive allergy testing called Extended RAST testing. This tests for up to 10 - 12 allergens per test. These extensive tests are not fully funded by Medicare and will attract an out-of-pocket fee (starting from \$117.00).



What happens next?

While there is not yet a cure for allergic disease, minimising exposure to allergens, managing symptoms with medications, and allergen immunotherapy (desensitisation) are methods that can be useful in controlling allergic symptoms.

Once the allergy triggers are identified, your doctor can help you establish a treatment plan, including recognising symptoms of an allergic reaction and how to treat them.

**For further information, please speak
with your doctor or visit:**

**Anaphylaxis Australia:
www.allergyfacts.org.au**

**Australasian Society of Clinical
Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA):
www.allergy.org.au**



Allergy testing is performed at selected Abbott Pathology collection centres. Please visit www.abbottpathology.com.au or contact the Mile End Laboratory on 08 8159 7900.



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