

• The London Road Clinic •

## What is an Allergy?

An allergy is a response by your body to a substance that you have breathed, swallowed or touched. These substances are normally harmless but in some people a chain of reactions are triggered which can cause a variety of symptoms:

Sneezing, itchiness, runny nose, stuffy nose, watery and itchy eyes, wheezing, rashes, swelling of mouth and throat, difficulty in swallowing/speaking, severe asthma, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, collapse.

### Q What are these substances?

**A** House dust mite faeces, pollens, weeds, moulds, saliva, dander from domestic pets and non-domestic animals, industrial chemicals, foods, especially peanuts, tree nuts, soya, milk, egg, fish, crustaceans, celery, mustard and sesame and drugs.

### Q Is it common?

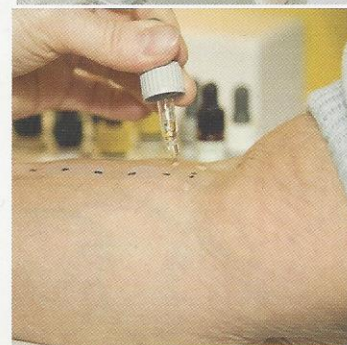
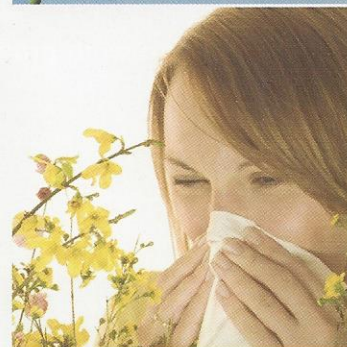
**A** In most industrialised countries the prevalence of allergic conditions has risen significantly in recent decades and in the UK 1 in 4 is estimated to have some sort of allergy with the number thought to increase to as many as 1 in 2 by the year 2015.

### Q How does it interfere with my life?

**A** An allergic reaction can occur at home, school, college, work, when out on social occasions or when travelling away from home. It is important to be aware of those substances to which you are allergic so that you can avoid them where possible, reduce contact with them, alter your treatment if you are aware that you are going to come into contact, inform others with you of your allergy should you develop a severe reaction and require emergency treatment.

### Q How is it diagnosed?

- A**
1. A detailed history. The Consultant will take a detailed case history focusing on the present complaint, personal and/or family histories of allergies, events surrounding the present complaint and likely causative allergens.
  2. Skin testing. When the allergens most likely to be implicated in your condition have been identified by a study of the case history, skin testing may be carried out using skin testing solutions and recording on skin test reaction charts.
  3. Blood tests of the allergic reaction mediating substances are performed.
  4. Lung function tests of developing asthma.
  5. Bronchial provocation test. The susceptibility of the airways to produce an allergic reaction is measured.



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6. Food challenges. Specific foods are identified and removed from diet and symptoms monitored.

## Q Can it be treated?

**A** Yes. Management includes:

1. Identification of the offending allergens and advice regarding avoidance, for example avoidance of high pollen exposure, exposure to household allergens and pet allergens.
2. Medication. This involves the use of antihistamine tablets and sprays, corticosteroid tablets, drops and sprays and innovative medications to reduce allergic reactions.
3. Desensitisation. This can be performed with skin prick testing or the newly developed desensitisation involving droplet application under the tongue.

## Q Is allergy a growing problem?

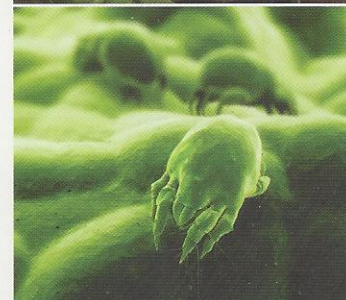
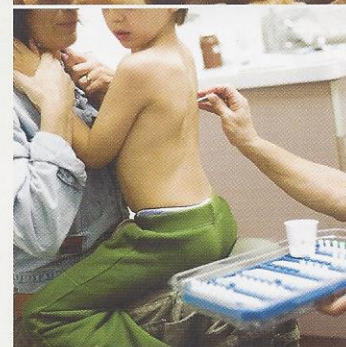
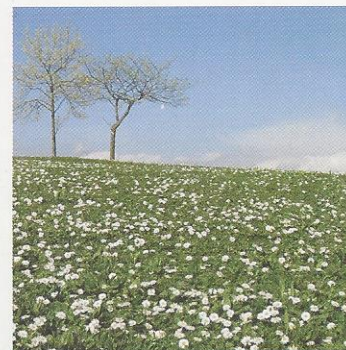
**A** In most industrialised countries the prevalence of allergy has significantly risen in recent decades and 20% now suffer from some form of allergy and by 2015 as many as 50% are estimated to be affected. A recent quality of life study on allergy indicated that 90% of sufferers had concrete repercussions in their daily life with loss of appetite and the inconvenience of having to blow ones nose all the time, tiredness, insomnia and reduced concentration. The disease affected the professional lives of 70%. The possibility of allergy should therefore be prioritised in all symptomatic patients, particularly if there is a personal or family history of allergic disease. The London Road Clinic provides extensive allergy assessment in an expert and caring environment.

## Q If I come to The London Road Clinic what will happen?

**A** Patients will see a Medical Consultant and undergo a full detailed personalised history. Any likely allergens will then be identified for formal testing. You will also have a skin prick test/patch testing and total and non-specific serum IgE level estimation assessed. Also pulmonary function testing and bronchial provocation testing to determine airway reactivity is performed where indicated. Formal food challenge testing is also provided where indicated.

## Q Can I just book in to The London Road Clinic for this?

**A** You can, but we prefer it if you bring or send a referral from your GP. This will then tell us of any past or ongoing medical conditions which you may forget to mention during your consultation.



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