

# H PEDIATRIC UNIT

## Allergic Reactions

If you live in Indiana, I am sure you know plenty of people who struggle with allergies. Whether seasonal, environmental, food or medications, there are many substances that we come into contact with every day that can cause people to have an unwanted reaction. These reactions can range from mild (common) to life threatening (rare). Our immune systems are always on guard, looking for anything foreign that might be dangerous for us. Sometimes the immune system gets carried away and starts reacting to things that are not actually dangerous to us. We refer to these responses as “allergic” reactions.

Most allergies would be considered mild with common complaints such as scratchy throat, itchy eyes, sneezing, coughing, and runny or congested nose. These types of reactions are often due to a small particle in the air being inhaled, such as pollen, dust, or dog/cat dander. Often these reactions are noted during specific seasons or in certain environments. Of course, avoiding the trigger for the allergy is most important but when that is not possible, a medication such as Benadryl can often be helpful. If it is a seasonal allergy, daily antihistamine can minimize symptoms.

Food allergies are becoming more prevalent. Peanuts, tree nuts (such as almonds, cashews, macadamia nuts), eggs, soy, milk, wheat, sesame and shellfish are some of the most common triggers. It is important that people with food allergies be aware of all ingredients in the foods they eat. These reactions may begin with hives (blotchy, sometimes itchy rash) on the skin but can progress to more serious symptoms such as swelling of the lips and/or tongue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or sometimes even trouble breathing that, if not treated promptly, can lead to shock. This is called “anaphylaxis” and is a medical emergency. Many with known food allergies have an epi-pen that is to be used if any of the serious symptoms listed above occur. If your child has a food allergy, please make sure that any caretakers have the information regarding their allergy AND know what to do in case an exposure does occur.



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Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening allergic reaction which usually occurs within minutes to a few hours of exposure to eliciting substance. Notable symptoms can include (but are not limited to) cough, wheezing, swelling face/lips/tongue, hives, sweating, flushed skin, fast heartbeat, and rapid breathing. If you notice someone with these symptoms, call 911. Once medical personnel are in route, administer the epi-pen if one is available. If an epi-pen is not available, give Benadryl and monitor closely until help arrives. Knowing what to do in this situation could be the difference between life and death in someone with a severe allergy.

For more on this and other topics, head to [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org). This is a great resource for health tips designed for parents by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

*Should a situation arise in which your child needs to be admitted to a hospital, remember Hendricks Regional Health is home to Hendricks County's only designated pediatric unit, specially designed to treat children. Our experienced staff is available 24/7 to care for all ages from birth to 18 years. Learn more at [hendricks.org/pediatrics](http://hendricks.org/pediatrics).*