

# Allergies



Allergic disorders are very common in Australia with approximately 4.1 million Australians<sup>1</sup> 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 asthma<sup>1</sup>. Allergies can cause a variety of symptoms, including:

Abdominal	Cramping, vomiting and diarrhea 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 June 2010]

## Where can I go for an allergy test?

Allergy testing is performed at selected Laverty Pathology collection centres. Please visit [www.laverty.com.au](http://www.laverty.com.au) or contact your nearest laboratory for more information:

Armidale	Ph: (02) 6771 5692
Barrack Heights	Ph: (02) 4295 8900
Bowral	Ph: (02) 4861 4192
Caringbah	Ph: (02) 9717 0288
Coffs Harbour	Ph: (02) 6652 4322
Forster	Ph: (02) 6554 7129
Gosford	Ph: (02) 4324 1088
Griffith	Ph: (02) 6964 1103
Gunnedah	Ph: (02) 6742 3513
Killara	Ph: (02) 9499 4986
Kogarah	Ph: (02) 8566 2200
Kotara	Ph: (02) 4923 4311
Liverpool	Ph: (02) 8778 1600
Merewether	Ph: (02) 4929 8729
Muswellbrook	Ph: (02) 6541 1833
North Ryde	Ph: (02) 9005 7000
Orange	Ph: (02) 6360 2519
Port Macquarie (Base Hospital)	Ph: (02) 5524 2500
Port Macquarie	(02) 6584 7855
Strathfield	Ph: (02) 9747 6972
Tamworth	Ph: (02) 6768 5333
Taree	Ph: (02) 6552 0094
Wagga Wagga	Ph: (02) 6925 5766
Wanniassa	Ph: (02) 6282 3499
Westmead	Ph: (02) 9687 0503

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## 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. Lavery Pathology offers testing for up to four allergens or allergen mixes each test. If your doctor wishes to test additional allergens, please contact Dr Lucinda Wallman, Head of Immunology, on (02) 9005 7000.



## 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](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au)

Australasian Society of Clinical  
Immunology and Allergy (ASCI):  
[www.allergy.org.au](http://www.allergy.org.au)



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