

# Spotlight on Health

## Allergic Asthma

About 25 million people in the United States have asthma.<sup>1</sup> For about 70% of people with asthma, symptoms are triggered (at least partly) by allergens such as pollen, house dust mites, or pet dander.<sup>2</sup> Healthcare providers (HCPs) call this “allergic asthma.” However, many people with allergic asthma may not know that their symptoms can be triggered by certain allergens.

May is *National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month*. With more pollen in the air, it can be a hard time of year for people with allergic asthma. This newsletter outlines the importance of identifying triggers of allergic asthma for better management.

### Symptoms and Diagnosis

Having asthma means that the airways in your lungs are swollen and very reactive. This leads to frequent coughing, wheezing, tightness in the chest, and struggling to breathe.<sup>3</sup> The symptoms of allergic asthma and non-allergic asthma can be the same, but the underlying triggers are different.

To find out if you have asthma, your HCP may need to ask about your personal and medical history, and even your family history. He or she may also need to do a physical exam, including lung function tests, and get an x-ray of your lungs or sinuses.

Finding out what triggers your asthma symptoms is an important step to getting proper treatment. To find out if your asthma is caused by allergies, your HCP can do specific allergy tests as recommended in well-established guidelines.<sup>4</sup> In the past, “skin-prick” tests were the only type of testing available. Now, blood testing is also available. Allergy test results can identify exactly which allergens are triggering your symptoms. The test results also give HCPs insights on how to avoid and manage your triggers.

### Management

While there is no cure for allergic asthma, symptoms can often be well-managed. Properly managing asthma could save you from missing work or school. Following your healthcare provider’s recommendations could even prevent a trip to the emergency room.



### Common Allergic Asthma Triggers (Allergens)

- Molds
- Pollen
- Animal dander (dead skin cells)
- Cockroach droppings
- Dust mite droppings

### Facts in the United States<sup>1,5</sup>

- 40 to 50 million: number of people with some sort of allergy
- 25 million: number of people with asthma
- 17.5 million: number of people with allergic asthma
- 11.5 million: number of people with asthma attacks in 2015
- 1.6 million: number of people with asthma-related emergency department visits in 2013
- 3,615: number of asthma-related deaths in 2015

Often, medicines that help open the airway and reduce swelling are needed to control symptoms. But another important way to manage asthma in the long-term, that may also reduce your need for medications, is to avoid the allergens that trigger symptoms. This is why it is so important for people with asthma to find out if they have allergic triggers, and what they are.

If you are seeing your primary HCP, he or she may decide that you should see a specialist. This can be an allergist who focuses on allergic triggers, or a pulmonologist who focuses on breathing issues.<sup>5</sup> Their expertise can often help further control your asthma. As a result, you would be able to enjoy more activities in life with fewer symptoms to worry about.

## How Quest Diagnostics Can Help

Quest offers ImmunoCAP® Specific IgE blood tests, which can identify allergies to many allergens in a single blood draw. Your HCP can request tests for specific allergies or panels of allergies relevant to where you live. Quest also offers allergy tests for stinging insects, penicillin, and foods.

## Additional Information

For more information, visit [QuestDiagnostics.com/home/patients/tests-a-z/allergies-asthma](http://QuestDiagnostics.com/home/patients/tests-a-z/allergies-asthma) or these helpful websites:

- [aafa.org/page/allergic-asthma.aspx](http://aafa.org/page/allergic-asthma.aspx)
- [acaai.org/asthma/symptoms](http://acaai.org/asthma/symptoms)
- [aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/conditions-a-to-z-search/allergic-asthma](http://aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/conditions-a-to-z-search/allergic-asthma)

## References

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