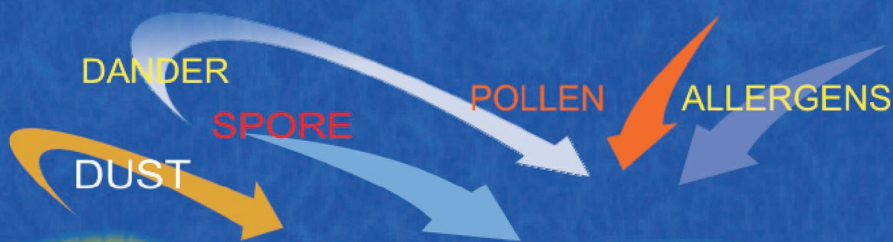


Dr A K Sethi

Combating Allergy Naturally



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Branch : Hyderabad

5-1-707/1, Brij Bhawan (Beside Central Bank of India Lane)

Bank Street, Koti, Hyderabad - 500 095

☎ 040-24737290

E-mail: vspublishershyd@gmail.com

Branch Office : Mumbai

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Preface

Allergy is the bane of our modern civilisation and has assumed epidemic proportions in all parts of the world. It poses one of the greatest health challenges of the 21st century, because no curative treatment has been found so far. Moreover, with scientific advancement, the menace of environmental pollution has also contributed towards the problem of Allergy.

Allergies are of several types. Some individuals are allergic to dust and changes in temperature; others are adversely affected by certain food substances or medicines. A few people suffer from skin allergy and a handful develop allergic symptoms due to insects and even their pet animals.

Since Allopathic treatment has failed to find a cure for the curse of Allergy, it is worthwhile trying other alternative forms of treatment like Ayurveda, Yoga, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, Magnetotherapy, Colour Therapy, Acupressure, Music Therapy, Vastu Shastra and Feng Shui.

I have ventured to write this book in order to educate the layman about the different aspects of Allergy and hope the readers will find it useful and enjoyable to read. For any queries and clarification, readers are free to contact me on telephone no. (011) 27044226 or 9811506972 or mail to ***Sethi62in@yahoo.com***.

Acknowledgement

At the outset, I must thank my publishers **M/s Pustak Mahal** for giving me the opportunity to write this book for the layman on an ailment which is widely prevalent around the globe, but there is no known cure for it.

I am grateful to the patients who came to our clinic for treatment of Allergy and benefitted from the alternative forms of treatment. I am indebted to the following experts in the Alternative therapies, i.e. Shri RL Jaggi - Colour Therapy, Swami Ananta Bharati - Yoga, Shri NS Dabas - Vastu Shastra and Magnetotherapy, Dr Ruma Banerjee - Naturopathy and Physiotherapy, Dr RK Kumar - Homeopathy.

My special thanks to Shri SK Gaba for providing me the latest material on the modern as well as alternative therapies of Allergy. Mrs Kiran Arora has done the tedious task of computer typing, scanning and compiling the book.

My wife Dr. Sunanda Sethi, an Ayurvedacharya and a Reiki Grandmaster, has been a continuous source of inspiration for me. I thank my children Rupal and Mitali, without whose cooperation this book would not have been completed.

–Dr AK Sethi

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What is Allergy

When we mention the word “Allergy”, majority of people correlate it with “**Aachoo**” – sneezing, running nose, watering of eyes, cough, etc. Some people think of allergy to medicines like Penicillin, Sulfa drugs, etc. and others connect it to food substances like milk, meat, cheese, etc.

Unfortunately, allergy has become the bane of modern civilisation and we find ourselves allergic to several substances like pets, insects, perfumes, wheat, food preservatives, latex (gloves), plants, metals like arsenic, etc. Allergy is also a complicated and enigmatic subject for doctors and scientists, since neither the causative mechanism is clear, nor the treatment is satisfactory.

In order to understand what allergy is all about, we must first understand its basic mechanism. Allergy is closely related to our Immune System – the system which protects us from sickness and diseases. Our body is so designed that whenever a foreign invader (bacteria, virus, chemical, heat, cold, wind, water, etc.) or inner enemy (tumour, aged cells, etc.) attacks our body, the immune system gets activated to protect us from this invader.

The innate (inborn) immune system consists of barriers such as skin and mucous membranes, enzymes and white blood cells (WBC) called neutrophils in its armamentarium. If the innate immune system is unsuccessful, the adaptive immune system takes over.

This system consists of cells such as lymphocytes and monocytes and their products such as antibodies, cytokines and antigen-specific cytotoxic (killer) cells. This system does not damage the body tissues, but destroys the abnormal material (invader). It also remembers the encounters with specific invaders such that subsequent encounters by the host with the same agents activate the immune response more quickly and vigorously, preventing recurrence of the disease caused by the invader.

In contrast to the adaptive immune system, in certain individuals there is an over-reactive immune system, i.e. there is an abnormal reaction to the ordinarily harmless substances (invaders). This disorder is called an **Allergy** or **Hypersensitivity**.

What Happens During an Allergic Reaction

When a person with a hypersensitive or hyper-alert immune system is exposed to an invader (an allergen), a series of events take place:-

1. The WBC of the body start to produce a specific type of antibodies called Immunoglobulin E (IgE) to fight the allergen.
2. These antibodies attach to another types of cells called mast cells, which are found in the airways and in the digestive system where the allergens enter the body.
3. The mast cells release a variety of chemicals like histamine, serotonin, etc. which produce localised effects like sneezing, running nose, watery eyes, itching, diarrhoea, vomiting, etc. or generalised effects like breathing difficulty, low blood pressure, swelling of body, weakness, loss of consciousness, shock or even death.

There are two major differences between the normal immune reaction and allergic reaction:-

1. In a normal individual there is an antigen-antibody reaction, which protects the individual (host) while

in a person with allergy, the reaction of allergen with tissue-bound antibody (IgE) can lead to several unpleasant symptoms to the body and causation of disease.

2. In an allergic person, the body does not produce antibodies (IgE) unless he has been sufficiently exposed to the allergen earlier and for a prolonged period. Hence in cases of Food Allergy, the person who has been eating the (allergic) food substance regularly is more prone to develop a reaction than to a new substance recently added to his diet.

There is another type of allergic reaction seen in allergic individuals, which is known as **Delayed Hypersensitivity Reaction** or **Cellular Allergy**. In this case, the body, instead of producing IgE antibodies, has overreactive lymphocytes produced by thymus gland. When exposed to certain allergic substances which come into direct contact with the skin, this type of allergic reaction is observed. The lymphocytes while reacting to get rid of the foreign material or toxin give rise to certain skin changes causing a disease called **Contact Dermatitis**. This type of allergic reaction is also seen when the body rejects the organs transplanted in the body.



Types of Allergies

As written earlier, allergy is of different types depending on the mechanism of action and the offending agent (allergen). For a layman it will be easier to comprehend if allergy is classified based on the causative agent. Thus the types of allergy may be classified as given below:-

- Dust Allergy
- Food Allergy
- Drug Allergy
- Insect Allergy
- Skin Allergy
- Allergy due to other substances

Dust Allergy

Dust allergy refers to allergic symptoms caused by inhaling (breathing in) certain microscopic particles found in the environment surrounding us. These allergens (also called aeroallergens) may be found either at home, in our place of work or while travelling from one place to another. The common aeroallergens are as follows:

- Dust, smoke, fumes and gases emitted by polluting vehicles, industries and factories are most common aeroallergens in India.

- ❑ Climatic conditions like high humidity, sudden changes in temperature, especially from warm to cold and smog formation are also important factors causing allergic symptoms.
- ❑ Active and passive smoking is equally responsible for causing allergy and other symptoms of the respiratory system.
- ❑ Pollen grains of different plants suspended in air especially on windy and rainy days.
- ❑ Fungi and moulds found in damp and moist areas also cause allergic diseases.
- ❑ Dust mite found at home that collect in the mattresses, furniture, carpets and rugs, bedding draperies, clothes and floor, which are inhaled while dusting or cleaning the house.
- ❑ Inhalation of insect parts and droppings of cockroaches, flies, moths, butterflies, rats, mice, bed bugs, mosquitoes, houseflies, etc.
- ❑ Animal allergen in the form of epithelial scales (dander), hair or feathers of animals like dogs, cats, cattle, horse, sheep, goat, duck, etc.
- ❑ Occupational allergens like silica, asbestos, lead, nickel, coal, cotton, wool, fibres, paints, varnishes, resins, grain flour, formaldehyde, insecticides, pesticides, dyes, drugs, spices, printing ink, etc.

Food Allergy

Foods are mainly composed of proteins, carbohydrates and lipids. Usually, the major food allergens are the glycoproteins found in the food.

- ❑ About 2-3% of infants suffer from **cow's milk allergy**, which is the most common food allergy of childhood. This seems logical since cow's milk formula is usually the first foreign substance a baby consumes, and also the digestive and immune systems of the infant