# *Useful Information About Allergies*

An allergic reaction can be defined as the induction of an abnormal immune response upon contact with an external substance. It is a defensive and harmful response, triggered by the immune system when our body comes in contact with a variety of allergens and this response is exaggerated by the presence of antibodies. The tissues involved in this reaction are the nasal mucous membranes, eyes, bronchi and in some cases the cutaneous apparatus; these tissues become hyperactive and under certain external conditions, such as the presence of pollutants, they become even more sensitive.

**Symptoms of allergies**

The allergic reactions may be more or less severe and affect the following tissues:

**1. Conjunctivitis** - it is a health condition in which allergic symptoms can be observed in the eyes;

**2. Rhinitis** - it is characterized by the inflammation of the mucous membrane and leads to abundant secretion of mucous, watery nose and redness of the eyes;

**3. Asthma**- it is one of the most severe forms of allergic reaction and is a condition in which the patients experience progressive difficulty in breathing.

**4. Pollinosis** - this reaction is caused by the presence of pollens in the air and is commonly known as 'hay fever'. It is not a very severe allergic reaction and can be treated by common over the counter drugs;

Apart from the above, there are various other allergic reactions which lead to a variety of skin diseases. The most common allergy symptoms affecting the skin are: hives - it is a condition in which small eruptions appear in the skin accompanied by severe itching; eczema and contact dermatitis - these conditions are triggered when the skin comes in contact with special substances, such as nickel, harmful acids etc. At times, insect bites can also lead to the occurrence of allergic symptoms in our skin.

These reactions occur only in individuals who are sensitive to particular molecules known as antigens, which trigger a specific immune response mediated by immunoglobulin E. These individuals should be treated with vaccines or desensitizing agents so that they do not face any allergic reactions, when they come with contact with the substances they are allergic to. It is a fact that there is no permanent cure for allergy, because of which the patients are advised to avoid any contact with the allergens.

The most common allergens are pollen, especially those produced by wild grasses, olive trees, beech, birch tree, hazel, cypress and herbaceous plants such as ragweed and plantain.

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