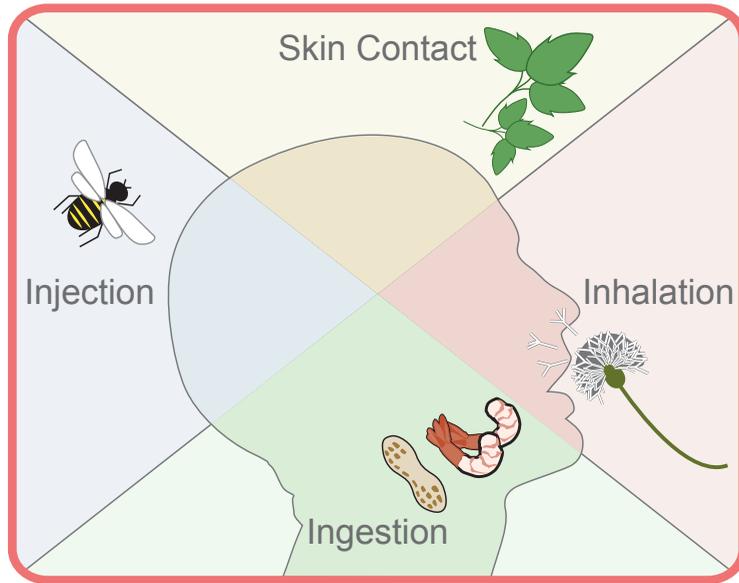


Allergic Reaction



 Office d'éducation des patients du CUSM
MUHC Patient Education Office



This material is also available on the MUHC Health Education Collection (<http://infotheque.muhc.ca/>) MUHC Patient Education Office (www.muhcpatienteducation.ca).

This material was developed by the McGill University Health Centre Emergency Department.

What is wrong?

An **allergic reaction** happens when your body overreacts to something you came into contact with. This can be nearly anything around you in everyday life, such as food, medications, pollen (from flowers or plants), or chemicals. It may be difficult to know what caused the reaction.

Your body can react in different ways:

- ▶ a red rash, hives (urticaria)
- ▶ abdominal pain, vomiting, or diarrhea
- ▶ sneezing, coughing, difficulty breathing
- ▶ swelling

What should I do at home?

If you know what caused the allergic reaction, avoid all future contact.

Your doctor might have prescribed medication. Take this as prescribed.

If you have been given anti-histamine medication, it can make you sleepy. You should therefore avoid driving and any activities that require concentration (such as operating heavy machinery).

In more severe cases, your doctor might have prescribed an allergy kit (EpiPen). Make sure to ask your doctor or pharmacist to show you how to use it. Always have your kit with you.

If the allergic reaction is caused by medication, you should wear a medical alert identification.

When am I going to feel better?

By the time you leave the hospital, you should be feeling better but it may take several days for some symptoms, like hives or itchiness, to completely disappear.

Should I see another doctor?

You should take an appointment with your family doctor. In certain cases, the emergency doctor might also refer you to a specialist (Allergist) for more tests.

When should I come back to the Emergency Department?

Return for any symptoms that continue or get worse.

Call 911 for an ambulance if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- ▶ Swelling of lips, tongue, or mouth
- ▶ Wheezing, trouble breathing, or chest tightness
- ▶ Passing out (fainting) or feeling like passing out
- ▶ Nausea, vomiting or abdominal pain

Notes