

ENVIRONMENTAL ALLERGY

Handbook

Information to help you and your family manage environmental allergies and live life to the fullest



ALLERGY  PARTNERS[®]

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ENVIRONMENTAL ALLERGY

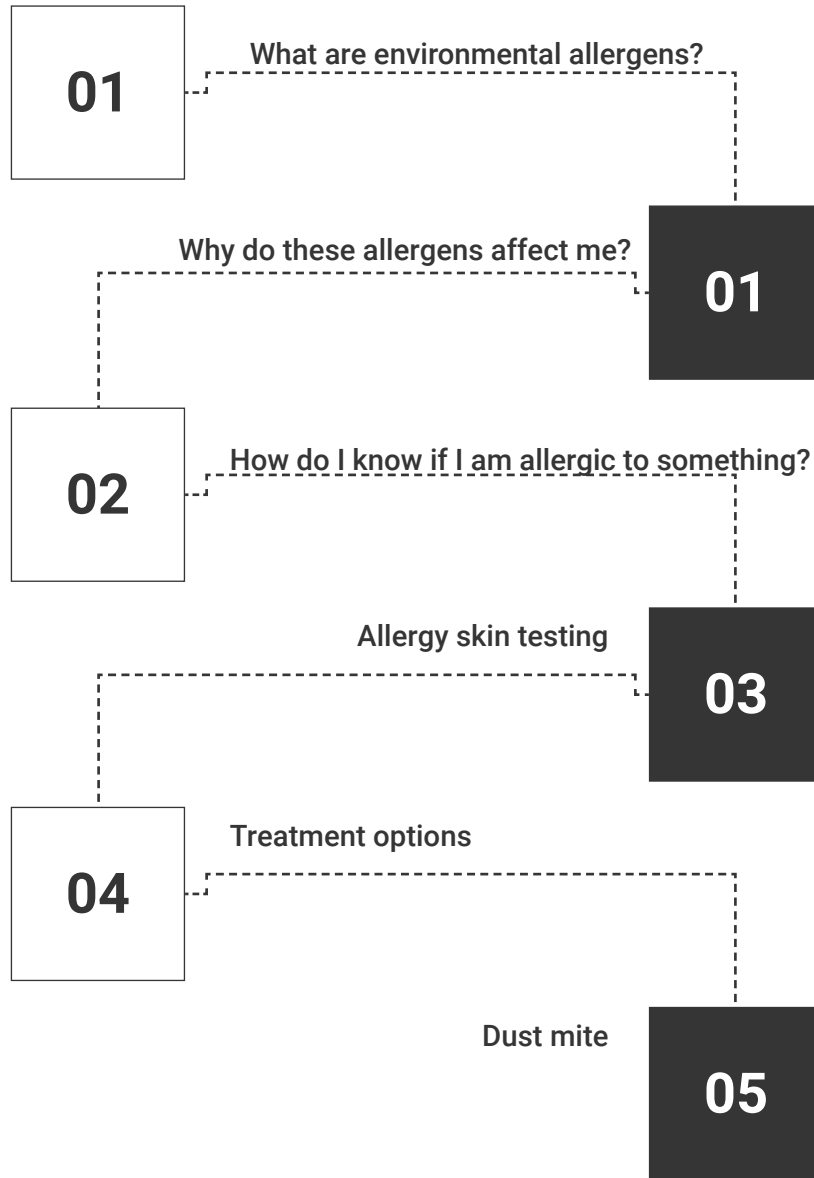
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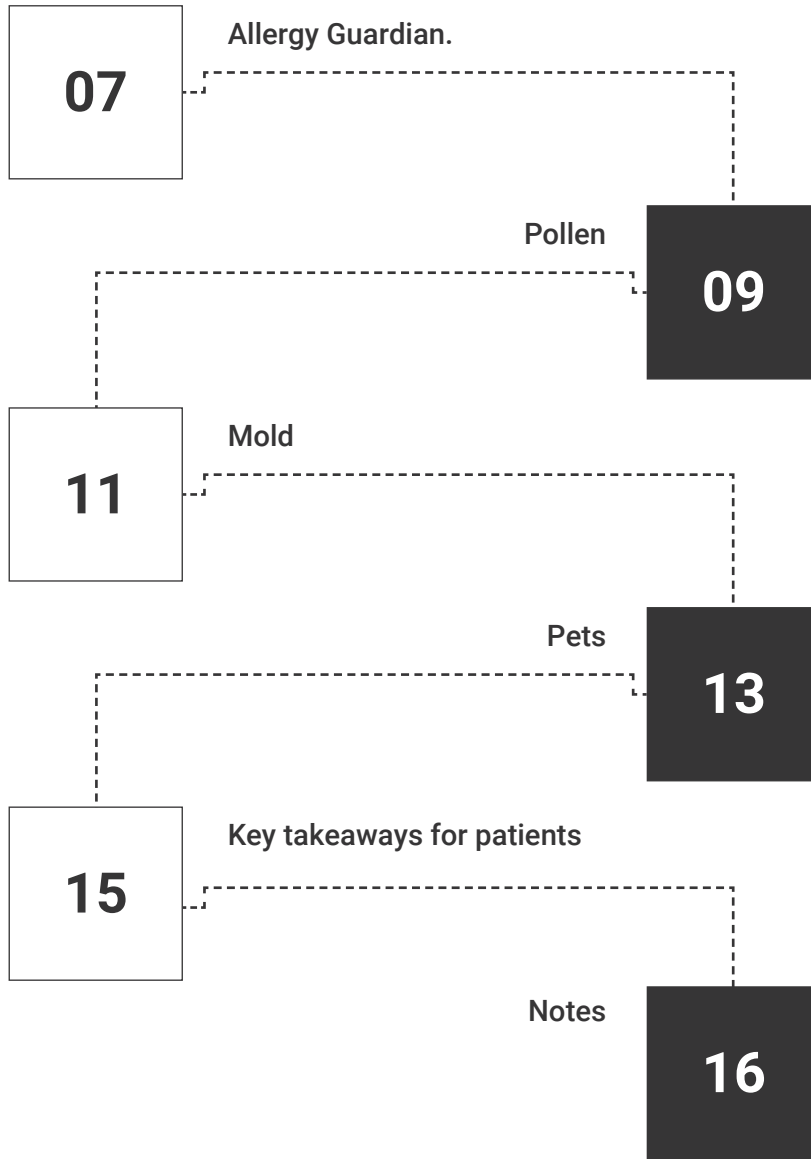


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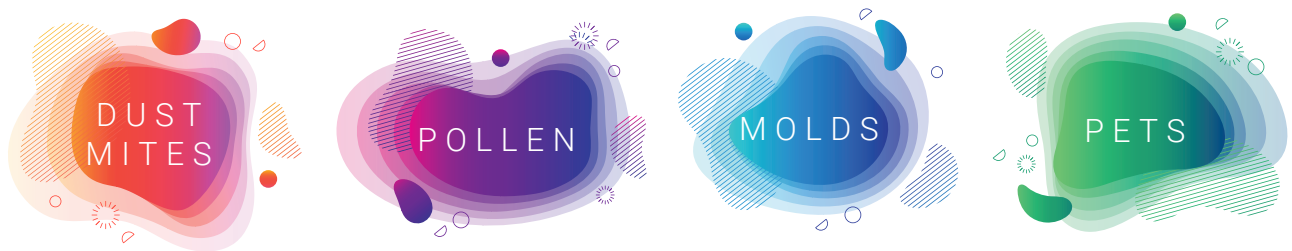




What are environmental allergens?

Environmental allergens are the substances in our environment which can trigger/cause allergies. Some of the main environmental allergens are pollens (released into the air by trees, grasses, and weeds), dust mites, mold, pet dander, pet saliva, and cockroaches.

The majority of allergens fall into 4 major categories:



✚ Irritants such as tobacco smoke and air pollution can exacerbate allergic symptoms.

Why do these allergens affect me?

Developing allergies takes time. For allergens that are present all year round, such as pet dander and dust mites, allergies can develop over a period as short as a few months. For allergens that are only present for short periods of time, such as pollens and molds, allergies often take several years to develop. When your immune system mistakenly produces allergic antibodies to these allergens it can lead to allergic inflammation. This is more likely to occur if you have a family history of allergies as certain genes make you more likely to develop allergies.



How do I know if I am allergic to something?

The main symptoms of environmental allergies include sneezing, itching, runny nose, and stuffy nose. Allergies can also affect the eyes by causing redness, itching, watering, or swelling. Some patients react to physical contact with allergens in the environment by developing hives or a rash. In some people, allergies can also trigger asthma or eczema and make others more prone to ear and sinus infections. Your doctor can then confirm the diagnosis of allergy by allergy testing.

Allergy Skin Testing



These tests involve gentle scratching or pricking of the very top layer of the skin with purified allergenic extracts and then observing for signs of a local reaction on the skin. This local reaction is typically of a small, itchy hive at the site of the scratch. For certain patients we may need to do a secondary skin test also known as intradermal testing. This testing involves injecting a small amount of purified allergenic extract just under the skin with a very small needle. Again, a raised, itchy hive indicates a positive test.

Positive reactions help determine the probability of sensitivity

to such items as pollen, animal dander, common mold, house dust, latex, or a variety of common foods. This type of skin testing is designed to detect a particular type of immune response—called an immediate-type reaction that is due to a type of antibody known as IgE. It is these IgE antibodies made against things like pollens or food that trigger the allergic reaction. This testing helps in the diagnosis of common ailments such as hay fever and food allergies. For most allergens, skin testing is more sensitive and specific than other forms of testing, is less expensive, easier to use, and provides results in about 15 minutes.

Treatment Options

There are several ways to address environmental allergies.



Avoidance: Avoidance is the best method to prevent your allergic symptoms but is not always possible. Once you know to which allergens you are allergic, you can develop strategies to help avoid them. This booklet can help you do just that.

Medication/Therapies: Your doctor may prescribe one or more medications to treat the symptoms of your allergies. Antihistamines come in oral preparations (liquids, pills), as nasal sprays, and eye drops. These medications work best in managing many of the common allergy symptoms, such as sneezing, runny nose, and itchy eyes.

Nasal sprays, either containing steroids and/or antihistamines, work by shrinking the swelling in your nose and treating the allergic process occurring in your nose. This in turn decreases the ability of that tissue to react upon allergen exposure. Along with nasal rinse, they are an excellent choice for treating nasal congestion. Nasal saline washes and irrigation are not technically medications. Washing your nose with salt water (saline) is effective for clearing out congestion, washing away pollens and other allergens sitting on your nasal tissue, and reducing post-nasal drainage. Many patients find this treatment very helpful.

There are many medications options available to help treat allergy symptoms. Your provider will work with you to determine which ones are best for you.

Immunotherapy: Immunotherapy, or “allergy shots”, is a form of treatment aimed at decreasing your sensitivity to allergens. While medications only treat the symptoms of allergies, Immunotherapy works to reduce the severity of your allergies and treats the underlying cause of your allergy symptoms. Immunotherapy has been shown to prevent the development of new allergies and even the development of asthma in at-risk children. Immunotherapy can also lead to long-lasting relief of allergy symptoms even after treatment is stopped. If your allergy symptoms are not well controlled with avoidance measures and medications, or you either do not tolerate or prefer to avoid long-term medications, your allergist can use this customized series of injections to reduce and control your symptoms.

Dust Mite

Dust Mites are microscopic, sightless, light-sensitive, eight-legged insects that live in our homes. They thrive in warm, damp homes and die when the temperature falls below 50 degrees or humidity levels are less than 50%. Dust mites can be found in carpeting, mattresses, comforters, pillows, box springs, upholstered furniture, and stuffed toys. Even dead mites are still allergic as their excreta and body parts also trigger allergic symptoms.



Recent studies show that mite allergy is a major risk factor for emergency visits for treatment of asthma.

Dust Mite Symptoms

Dust mite allergy symptoms caused by inflammation of nasal passages include:

- Sneezing, runny nose, and congestion
- Itchy, red, or watery eyes
- Itchy nose, roof of mouth or throat
- Cough
- Facial pressure and pain
- Swollen, blue-colored skin under your eyes (called 'allergic shiners')
- In a child, frequent upward rubbing of the nose (called the 'allergic salute')

If your dust mite allergy contributes to asthma, you may also experience:

- Difficulty breathing/chest tightness or pain
- An audible whistling or wheezing sound when exhaling
- Trouble sleeping caused by shortness of breath, coughing, or wheezing
- Bouts of coughing or wheezing that are worsened by a respiratory virus such as a cold or the flu

A dust mite allergy can range from mild to severe. A mild case of dust mite allergy may cause an occasional runny nose, watery eyes, and sneezing. In severe cases, the condition may be ongoing (chronic), resulting in persistent sneezing, cough, congestion, facial pressure, or severe asthma attack.





Addressing Dust Mites

Dust Mites thrive in specific environments. The best way to “avoid” Dust Mites is to control your environment with some of the following steps:

Encasings

Use dust mite proof encasings and covers for your mattress, pillows, blankets, comforters, and box springs.



Laundry

Use hot water to wash all bed linens, blankets, and comforters every 1 to 2 weeks.



Stuffed Animals

Minimize stuffed animals (no more than 1-2 washable animals). Also, place them in the freezer for 24 hours every 2 weeks.



Air Filters

Make sure to change your filters monthly.



Vacuum & Dusting

Vacuum and dust one to two times per week (when patient is not present). Wearing a mask may help if the patient must do the vacuuming. Use HEPA filters or high filtration vacuum bags, and the “damp method” for dusting.



Humidity

Keep humidity below 50%. Avoid vaporizers and humidifiers. Use AC and dehumidifiers on a regular basis.



Allergy Guardian



Allergy Guardian is dedicated to creating healthier homes for you and your family. By combining cutting-edge research with supreme comfort, our high-quality products give your home a chance in the fight against allergens.



+ Air Filtration



+ Healthy Beddings & Encasements




+ Personal Care



+ Allergen Control/ Home Care

Protect Your House & Give Back...

When you purchase allergen-reducing products for your home, you will also be helping to support asthma and allergy-related charities. Allergy Guardian donates 100% of profits from purchases of allergy bedding and other allergen control products to allergy research and support foundations.

A woman with blonde hair is lying in bed, smiling and holding a baby. The baby is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and pink shorts, and is lying on its back with its legs raised. The scene is set in a bright, airy room with large windows in the background.

Protecting your home from harmful allergens has never been easier.

Simply visit our Allergy Guardian website to see how our thousands of allergen-reducing products can start protecting your family today!

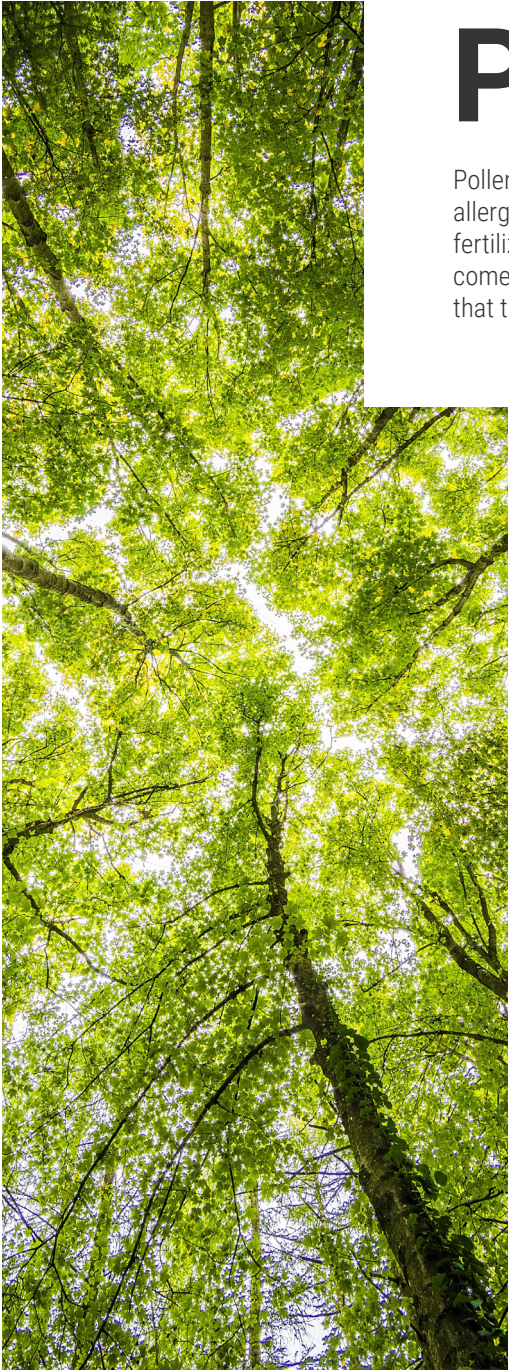
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Pollen

Pollen is one of the most common triggers of seasonal allergies. Many people know pollen allergy as “hay fever.” Each spring, summer, and fall, plants release tiny pollen grains to fertilize other plants of the same species. Most of the pollens that cause allergic reactions come from trees, weeds, and grasses. These plants make small, light, and dry pollen grains that travel by the wind.

+ Grasses are the most common cause of hayfever/pollen allergies. Ragweed is a main cause of weed allergies.

Some plants rely on insects to spread their pollen, like roses and some flowering trees. For instance, cherry trees, pear trees, and roses usually do not cause allergies as the pollen is not found in large enough amounts in the air.

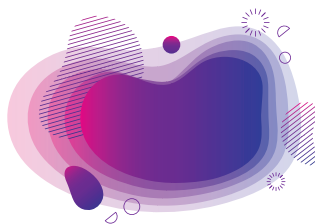
Other common sources of weed pollen include sagebrush, pigweed, lamb's quarters, and tumbleweed. Certain species of trees, including birch, cedar, and oak, also produce highly allergenic pollen. The types of pollens and when they are present depends upon the local climate and species. Your Allergy Partners allergist is an expert regarding pollens and their seasonal patterns.

Pollen Allergy Symptoms

People with pollen allergies only have symptoms when the pollens they are allergic to are in the air.

Symptoms include:

- Runny nose and mucus production
- Sneezing and nasal congestion
- Itchy nose, eyes, ears, and mouth
- Red and watery eyes
- Swelling around the eyes
- Cough, wheeze, and asthma symptoms if you have asthma



Addressing Pollen Allergies

There are several actions you can take to help reduce your allergic reaction to pollen.

Limit Outdoor Activities

Monitoring pollen counts and planning activities accordingly will help lessen the amount of pollen allergies you inhale and reduce symptoms. Make sure to wash clothes worn during outdoor activities promptly.



Air Conditioning & Filters

Keep windows closed during pollen season and use central air conditioning with clean air filters. This applies to your home and to any vehicles.



Medication

Start taking your nasal steroid spray before the pollen season starts. This allows the medicine to prevent your body from releasing histamine and other chemicals that cause your symptoms. Oral antihistamines and eye drops can provide more as needed relief.



Immunotherapy/Allergy Shots

Allergy shots can provide long-lasting symptom relief. Many patients experience significant relief after several months of treatment and peak benefit is often seen after 1-3 years of treatment.





Mold

Mold or fungi are tiny plants without roots or stems that reproduce by releasing spores into the air. Mold allergens cause your immune system to overreact when you breathe in mold spores. A mold allergy can make you cough, make your eyes itch, and cause other symptoms that make you miserable. In some people, mold allergy is linked to asthma and exposure causes restricted breathing and other airway symptoms.

Indoor molds grow in damp, musty areas like basements, garages, bathtubs, shower stalls, laundry rooms, refrigerators, vaporizers, and humidifiers. Outdoor molds prefer warm, moist, and shady confines such as mulch piles, flower and vegetable gardens, and fallen leaves.

Mold Allergy Symptoms

Mold allergy causes the same signs and symptoms that occur in other types of upper respiratory allergies. Signs and symptoms of allergic rhinitis caused by mold allergy can include:

- Sneezing
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Cough and postnasal drip
- Itchy/watery eyes, nose, and throat
- Cough, wheeze, and asthma symptoms if you have asthma

Mold allergy symptoms vary from person to person and range from mild to severe. You may have year-round symptoms or symptoms that flare up only during certain times of the year. You may notice symptoms when the weather is damp or when you're in outdoor or indoor spaces that have high concentrations of mold.





Addressing Mold Allergens

There are several actions you can take to help reduce your allergic reaction to mold.

Eliminate/Avoid Damp Areas

Avoid damp places like attics, basements, crawl spaces, garages, and storerooms. Properly address any water leaks or water damage. Use a dehumidifier to help keep damp areas as dry as possible.

Address Mold/Mildew Areas

Clean moldy areas with mold inhibitor such as X-14 or diluted bleach. Use mold retardant paints in areas where humidity and mold growth have been a problem.

Check for Mold/Mildew

Check closets, old shoes, food storage areas, and hidden areas around appliances for mold or mildew growth.

Air Filtration

Change and/or clean your air filter on your HVAC system frequently.

Plants & Vegetation

Check exterior of home for plants, compost piles, or wood piles that are too close to the home.

Avoid Vaporizers/Humidifiers

These items can encourage mold growth.



Pet Allergy

Pet allergy is an allergic reaction to proteins found in an animal's skin cells, saliva, or urine. Most often, a pet allergy is triggered by exposure to the dead flakes of skin (dander) a pet sheds. Any animal with fur can be a source of pet allergy, but pet allergies are most commonly associated with cats and dogs.

+ Unfortunately, no breed of cat or dog is 'hypoallergenic'.

Pet Allergy Symptoms

Pet allergy signs and symptoms caused by inflammation of nasal passages include:

- Sneezing/runny nose
- Itchy, red, or watery eyes
- Nasal congestion/postnasal drip
- Itchy nose, roof of mouth, or throat
- Swollen, blue-colored skin under your eyes (called 'allergic shiners')
- In a child, frequent upward rubbing of the nose (called the 'allergic salute')

If your pet allergy contributes to asthma, you may also experience:

- Difficulty breathing
- Chest tightness or pain
- Audible whistling or wheezing sound when exhaling
- Trouble sleeping caused by shortness of breath, coughing, or wheezing



Addressing Pet Allergies

There are several actions you can take to help reduce your allergic reaction to pets:

Avoid Pets

If you do not have a household pet, do not acquire one.

Frequent Baths

Washing cats or dogs at least weekly can decrease allergens.

Limit Indoor Access

It is ideal to keep pets outside, preferably in a house of their own. If allowed inside, limit their access to specific rooms of the house (preferably away from carpeted areas and bedrooms).

Air Filtration

Change and/or clean your air filter on your HVAC system frequently. HEPA filters can reduce significant amounts of animal allergens.

After Pet Contact

Make sure to change clothes and wash hands thoroughly after having direct contact with the pet.



Key takeaways for patients

- + Some of the main environmental allergens are pollens (released into the air by trees, grasses, and weeds), dust mites, mold, pet dander, pet saliva and cockroaches.
- + A family history of allergies increases your chances of having allergies as certain genes predispose people to developing allergies.
- + The main symptoms of environmental allergies include sneezing, itching, runny nose, stuffy nose, itching, hives, asthma, and eczema.
- + Allergy tests involve gentle scratching or pricking of the very top layer of the skin with purified allergenic extracts and then watching for signs of a local reaction on the skin.
- + Dust Mites are microscopic, sightless, light-sensitive, eight-legged insects that live in our homes. They thrive in warm, damp homes and die when the temperature falls below 50 degrees or humidity levels are less than 50%.
- + Recent studies show that mite allergy is a major risk factor for emergency visits for treatment of asthma.
- + Pollen is one of the most common triggers of seasonal allergies. Many people know pollen allergy as “hay fever.”
- + Grasses are the most common cause of hayfever/pollen allergies. Ragweed is a main cause of weed allergies.
- + Mold or fungi are tiny plants without roots or stems that reproduce by releasing spores into the air. Mold allergens cause your immune system to overreact when you breathe in mold spores.
- + Indoor molds grow in damp, musty areas like basements, garages, bathtubs, shower stalls, laundry rooms, refrigerators, vaporizers, and humidifiers.
- + Outdoor molds prefer warm, moist, and shady confines such as mulch piles, flower and vegetable gardens, and fallen leaves.
- + Pet allergy is an allergic reaction to proteins found in an animal’s skin cells, saliva, or urine.
- + Unfortunately, no breed of cat or dog is ‘hypoallergenic’.

Remember

Reactions can occur while undergoing treatment. Our providers are highly qualified to treat patients with the conditions explained in this book and are trained to oversee and interfere in case of a reaction.

Notes:

We are the nation's largest single-specialty allergy practice. The organization is dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of asthma and allergic related diseases.

Years of training and experience allow the physicians of Allergy Partners to offer specialty care for a broad spectrum of disorders in the field of allergy, asthma, and clinical immunology. Our physicians are board-certified/board-eligible specialists who offer the latest advances in allergy and asthma care for children and adults.

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