



Illinois Allergy and Asthma Specialists

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Hello! We are excited to announce the opening of our specialty practice, Illinois Allergy and Asthma Specialists, SC. We are dedicated to using our expertise in allergy, asthma and immunology to provide compassionate care. Our quarterly newsletter will provide you with current information pertaining to our field of practice.



Stinging Insect Allergy

It's that time of year again! Insects associated with venom allergy include honeybees, hornets, yellow jackets, and wasps, and are most active in late summer and early fall. Two million Americans are allergic to insect stings, and many may experience life-threatening reactions to the venom. Symptoms of anaphylaxis include hives, itchiness, swelling in areas other than the sting site, shortness of breath, a drop in blood pressure, tongue swelling, dizziness, unconsciousness and cardiac arrest.

If you have experienced anaphylaxis following an insect sting, you should seek the care of an allergist. Your doctor will discuss your reaction with you, and will determine if testing is necessary. Skin testing is available for the different types of venom, and frequently, blood testing is used as well to help in the diagnosis.

How can I prevent future reactions?

- 1) Avoidance is the primary defense!
 - Avoid wearing scented perfumes, deodorants, and hair care products.
 - Avoid wearing bright colored clothing.
 - Avoid walking barefoot in the grass, where stinging insects forage.
 - Avoid drinking from open soda cans, which stinging insects may crawl into.
 - Cover food when eating outdoors.
- 2) An allergist can prescribe and give instructions on how to use a self-administered epinephrine kit.
- 3) An allergist can provide a preventive treatment called venom immunotherapy (or venom allergy shots). It works by introducing gradually increasing doses of purified insect venom, and has been shown to be **98 percent effective** in preventing future allergic reactions to insect stings.

Ragweed Season is upon us!

Ragweed produces one billion pollen grains per season. These windborne, lightweight grains can travel up to 400 miles. Ragweed grows in fields, along roadsides, and in vacant lots. Prevalent throughout the Northeast, South and Midwest, it is a significant cause of fall allergies. August 15th marks the unofficial start of ragweed season, which lasts until October.

What can I do to decrease exposure?

- Keep windows closed to prevent pollen from drifting into the home. Use air conditioning, which cools, cleans and dries the air.
- Keep car windows closed.
- Minimize outdoor activity when pollen counts are high.
- Shower after spending time outside, as pollen can collect on the hair and skin.

Consider evaluation with an allergist if you:

- Have prolonged or severe symptoms of rhinitis, nasal polyps, asthma or recurrent sinusitis.
- Have symptoms interfering with quality of life.
- Experience an itchy mouth from raw fruits or vegetables.
- Have found medications to be ineffective or have had adverse reactions to medications.
- Have a child with allergic rhinitis, because immunotherapy may potentially prevent the development of asthma.