



ALLERGIES

Allergies can cause many childhood problems, including sneezing and runny noses. Irritating substances such as cigarette smoke can also cause “sniffles” and coughing.

Allergic reactions occur when the body’s immune system reacts to substances such as house dust, flower and plant pollen, medicines, foods, cigarette smoke, or insect bites. The first time a child is exposed to the substance, such as a certain food, there may be no reaction. However, the immune system may produce substances called antibodies. These antibodies may cause a reaction the next time.

Sometimes allergic reactions are life-threatening. A severe allergic reaction to a food, drug, or insect sting can cause swelling and breathing problems. This can be deadly! If you notice your child has an unusual reaction to any medicine, a bee or insect sting, or a food, tell your doctor. If your child’s reaction causes breathing problems, call for emergency help immediately!

A blood test can help identify allergies. If you think your child has allergies, talk to your doctor about how to identify and remove possible causes of allergic reactions. If your child does have allergies, talk with your doctor about the best treatment and medicines. Do not use over-the-counter nose sprays or medicines unless your child’s doctor says it is okay.

You can help your child by not smoking or using sprays such as air fresheners, hair sprays, or perfumes around your child.

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