

Got Allergies?

More people in the United States have allergies today compared with decades ago. Allergies are bad reactions to things around you or that you eat.

In 2010, more than half of Americans were sensitive to at least one allergen. That was the finding of one survey by the National Institutes of Health. Allergens are things that set off allergies. Many allergens-such as dust and mold-are found in the air.

"Allergies [are] increasing over time," said Andy Nish. He is a doctor from Georgia.



Corbis

Allergens in the air aren't the only problem. Kids' food allergies have risen too. Between 1997 and 2007, the number of kids with food allergies jumped 18 percent. Eating milk products and eggs can give some children rashes. Those foods can even cause some people to have trouble breathing.

What's behind the spread of allergies? Some scientists think our immune systems don't have enough to do. Immune systems help our bodies fight germs. But many kids today come in contact with fewer germs than their grandparents did. That's in part because they grow up in environments with fewer germs such as cleaner homes and smaller families. Experts say that when our immune systems have fewer germs to fight, they can get confused. They attack other things, such as milk that we drink, instead.



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Other scientists say hotter temperatures are to blame. They say the weather is warmer for longer periods now, so plants bloom longer. Plants release pollen, which is a common allergen.

Doctors do not know for sure what's making allergies increase. But they do know how to treat them with medicine. "There is very good treatment for allergies," Nish says. "No one should suffer with symptoms."

Take Cover!

Dust and other allergens that float into your nose are in for a blast—a cough or a sneeze, that is! Both are natural **reflexes**, or responses, to help keep you from getting sick. Here's a look at the big bursts.

Sneeze

Sneezes start at the back of your throat. Each quick burst can force out up to 40,000 droplets of saliva. The tiny droplets travel at up to 300 miles per hour.

Cough



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Coughs come out of your lungs. Each blast can push out 3,000 saliva droplets as fast as 50 miles per hour. Enough air comes out to almost fill a two-liter bottle.



Alamy

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to the text, what are increasing in the United States?

- A. allergens
- B. germs
- C. allergies
- D. reflexes

2. Which of the following best describes the solution proposed in the text for people who suffer from allergies?

- A. The solution is to stay away from dust and mold.
- B. The solution is to stop eating milk products and eggs.
- C. The solution is to hide from anything that causes allergies.
- D. The solution is taking medicine to help with allergy symptoms.

3. Allergies can affect someone's everyday life.

What evidence can be used to support the statement?

- A. "More people in the United States have allergies today compared with decades ago."
- B. "Allergens in the air aren't the only problem."
- C. "Those foods can even cause some people to have trouble breathing."
- D. "But kids today come in contact with fewer germs than their grandparents did."

4. What can be concluded from the passage?

- A. A person with allergies is sick and needs to see a doctor.
- B. A person who sneezes and coughs often may have allergies.
- C. A person who drinks milk and eats eggs will definitely get allergies.
- D. A person who lives in a place with hot weather will never get allergies.

5. What is the main idea of this article?

- A. Allergies are increasing, but simple steps can be taken to cope with them.
- B. Our own human nature has produced more allergies than ever.
- C. Everyday foods have caused a higher proportion of allergies than ever.
- D. Coughs and sneezes are reflexes to allergens.

6. Read the sentences:

"There is very good treatment for allergies,' Nish says. 'No one should suffer with **symptoms**.'"

As used in the text, what does "**symptoms**" mean?

- A. changes in the body that are signs that a person is sick
- B. changes in temperature that give people allergies
- C. changes in medicine to treat people when they are sick
- D. changes in people's immune systems that cause allergies

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Kids come into contact with fewer germs today, _____ their immune systems get confused and attack other things.

- A. if
- B. after
- C. although
- D. so

8. What can be concluded from the evidence that coughs and sneezes are natural reflexes and from the evidence that our immune system attacks allergens?

9. What two possible reasons for the increase in allergies are explained in the passage? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

10. What can be concluded about the increase of allergies in the future? Use the evidence from the text to support your answer.
