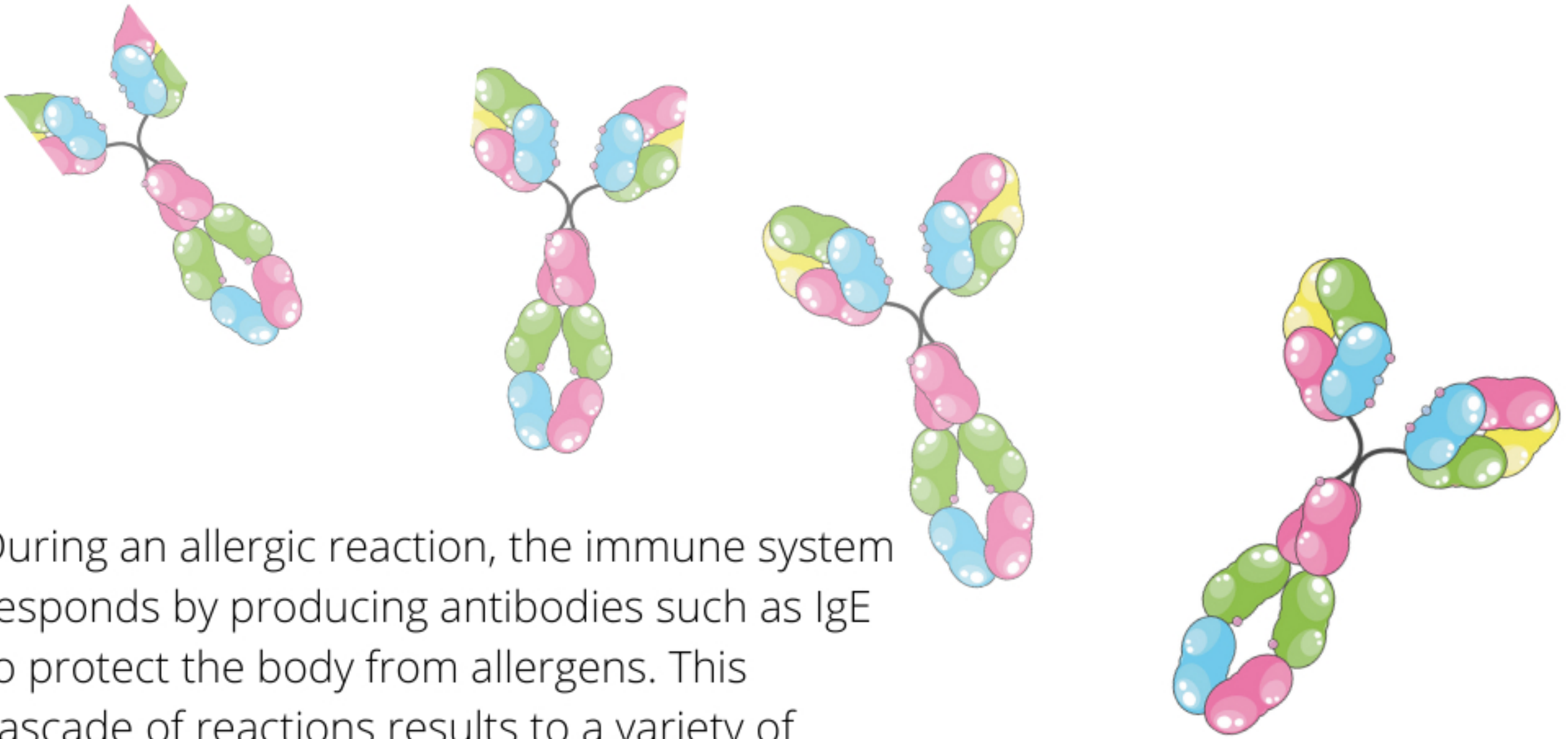


What is an allergy?

A general guide on the things you must know about allergies



Allergy is an *immune response* to a foreign substance that's not typically harmful to your body. These substances are called *allergens*.



During an allergic reaction, the immune system responds by producing antibodies such as IgE to protect the body from allergens. This cascade of reactions results to a variety of symptoms.

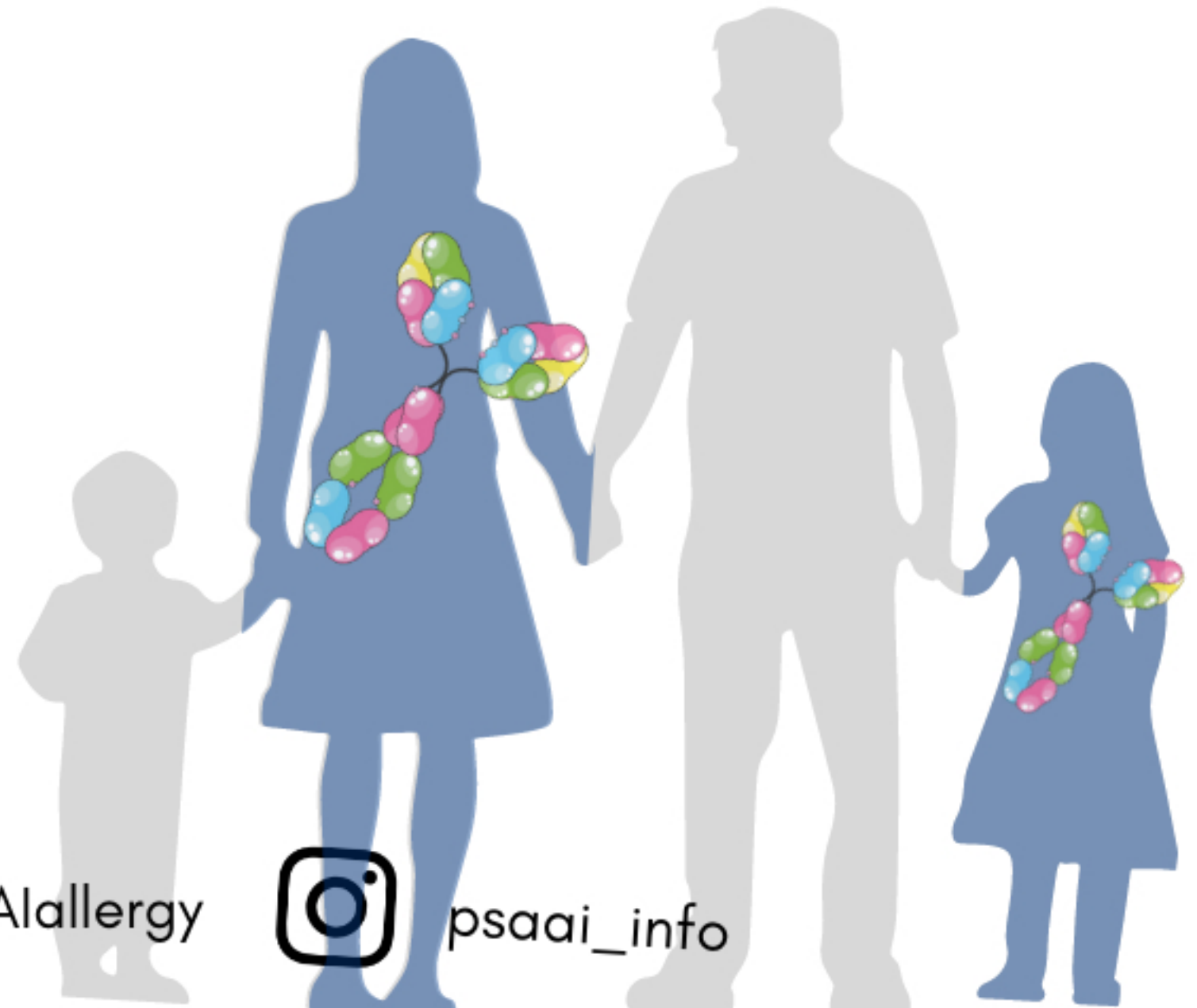
Immunoglobulin E (IgE)



Q: Who may experience an allergy?

A: Anyone can have an allergy, but those with a family history of *atopy* — the genetic tendency to develop allergic rhinitis, asthma and eczema — are more predisposed to having allergies.

There is a 20-40% risk of allergy in children with one atopic parent, and 40-60% risk in children with parents who are both atopic.



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Q: What can cause an allergy?

A: Substances that cause allergy, or *allergens*, include food, medications, plants, animal products, molds, chemicals, etc.

Common allergens



House dust mite



Cockroach



Milk



Eggs



Pollens of weeds,
grasses & trees



Molds



Peanut & tree
nuts



Shellfish



Pets (dogs, cats)



Wheat & soy



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Q: What are the signs & symptoms of an allergy?

A: Symptoms depend on the *type* and *severity* of the allergy. Mild allergies typically present with rash and itching, while severe ones present with swelling, palpitations, difficulty of breathing, and lightheadedness.



Sneezing, runny nose
& teary eyes



Urticaria



Swelling of lips



Angioedema around
the eyes



Types of allergies and their symptoms



Skin allergy

Atopic dermatitis/eczema: *red, weeping/crusted rash that itch*

Urticaria & angioedema: *hives, swelling, itching*



Allergic conjunctivitis

tearing, itching and swelling of eyes



Food allergy

vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, hives, swelling



Respiratory allergy

Allergic rhinitis: *sneezing, runny nose, nasal congestion & itching*

Allergic asthma: *coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath*



Systemic anaphylaxis

palpitations, difficulty of breathing, lightheadedness, loss of consciousness

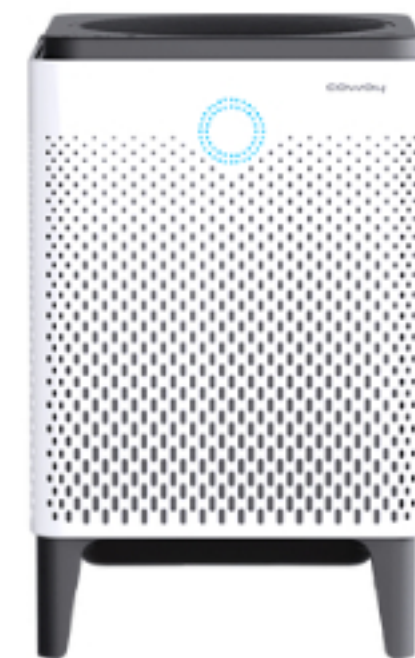


Q: Can allergy symptoms be prevented?

A: *Avoidance* of allergens is the best way to prevent allergy symptoms. For example, to avoid food allergens, always *read food labels* and ask questions when dining out. To avoid dust mites, improve *ventilation* at home, install proper *air filters*, use *polyurethane-coated* beddings, and replace carpets and draperies regularly.



Make it a habit to read food labels to check for potential allergens



Use a dehumidifier or air filters at home



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Q: Is there a way to know what your allergy triggers are?

A: Your allergist may conduct a *skin prick test* wherein potential allergens are pricked into the skin.

If you're allergic to a particular substance, your skin will become red and inflamed. This helps you pinpoint your exact triggers, making it easier for you to avoid them!



Specific allergens are pricked into the skin



A positive skin test will produce red, itchy, often raised area



Q: How are allergy symptoms treated?

A: Allergy symptoms are treated with *antihistamines*, *steroids*, or a *combination* of both. Severe symptoms may require an *emergency epinephrine* shot. You must seek help immediately or go to the nearest ER if your symptoms are severe.



Q: Is there a long-term treatment for allergy symptoms?

A: Yes. This can be done through allergen immunotherapy also called "allergy shots" wherein a specific allergen is repeatedly administered in gradually increasing doses until one's sensitivity to that allergen is decreased.

This overall decreased sensitivity provides lasting relief and protection against allergic symptoms.

Types of allergen immunotherapy



Sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT)



Subcutaneous immunotherapy (SCIT)



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Q: Can allergy shots be used as treatment for all allergy types ?

A: While allergen immunotherapy is used in treating allergic rhinitis, allergic bronchial asthma and atopic dermatitis with concomitant respiratory allergies, it is **NOT** used to treat food allergies. The best option for people with food allergies is strict avoidance of that food.



Q: When should you consider allergy shots?

A: Those following are candidates for allergy shots:

- 1 have symptoms not controlled adequately by medications and avoidance measures;
- 2 are having adverse effects from medication; and
- 3 wish to reduce long term use of medications



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