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How to protect your baby against allergies

Allergies can be really distressing for any child but particularly for babies. This is because they don't understand what is happening to them and therefore become distressed. This can be upsetting to watch as a parent. Fortunately, there are things you can do to protect your baby against allergies and ease their symptoms.

Allergies are said to be the most common type of chronic disease in Europe. Studies show that the number of people living with allergies in the UK is rising by **5% every year**.

How common are allergies in children?

Overall, around **1 in 40 children** in the UK are thought to suffer from some type of serious allergy. The **most common** allergies include:

- Food allergy.
- Pollen.
- Dust-mite.
- Insect bites and stings.

It can sometimes be quite difficult to work out what your baby may be allergic to. For example, you might wonder if one of your baby's allergies is to pollen, especially if they develop symptoms as hay fever season strikes. But this isn't necessarily the case.

Very small babies are unlikely to have spent much time outdoors and have had little exposure to pollen. They are more likely to have been exposed to other allergens indoors. These can include house dust mites, animal dander, and mould, all of which can also cause allergy symptoms such as AR and develop at any time of year.

Can you reduce your baby's chances of developing allergies?

Allergies – such as [hay fever](#) – and respiratory conditions – such as asthma – often run in families. Therefore, if one or more of a baby's parents has a pollen allergy or another allergic disease, their baby is more likely to develop these conditions too.

Fortunately, there are measures you can implement to slow the development of these conditions or even reduce their chances of them developing.

What should I do if my baby shows allergy symptoms?

If you are concerned about your baby's symptoms and suspect they may have allergies, you can consult your GP. However, as it can be difficult to determine their root cause, you may be referred for specialist advice from a paediatrician or an allergy specialist.

If your baby shows signs of a [severe allergic reaction](#), such as wheezing, trouble breathing or loss of consciousness, you should treat this as a medical emergency and contact 999 immediately.

How can I treat my baby's allergies?

If you suspect your baby has an allergy you should try to prevent any further exposure to the source. If the allergy is food or drink related this would mean choosing alternative ingredients.

Once an allergy is confirmed, your GP or allergy specialist will be able to prescribe the best form of treatment for your child. Mild allergies can usually be treated at home; however, more severe allergies may require medication to be prescribed. For babies and young children this can include [antihistamines](#), steroids, or adrenaline auto-injectors (AAIs) – sometimes known as EpiPens.

Protecting your baby against allergies

It's important you take specific measures to prevent allergy triggers from irritating your [baby's airways](#) and causing them distress.

Dr Deborah Lee of [Dr Fox Online Pharmacy](#) explains the easiest ways to keep your baby safe against house dust, animals, and mould:

How to protect your baby against house dust

- Use anti-allergy bedding.
- Dust regularly by using a damp cloth.
- Wash floors regularly and, if you can, avoid having carpets in your house.
- Declutter – dust will settle on objects that are left out in the open.

How to protect your baby against animal dander

- Ideally, avoid pets that have animal dander such as dogs, cats, rabbits and guinea pigs.
- If you do have pets, keep them out of the baby's room and off the beds and furniture.
- Wash the pet once a week to minimise animal dander.

How to protect your baby against mould

- Prevent dampness in your home and use a dehumidifier if needed.
- Ensure adequate ventilation.
- Dry your washing in an airing cupboard or tumble drier that is not near your baby.

If you are concerned about your baby's allergy symptoms, or if you suspect that their symptoms have worsened you should consult with your baby's GP or allergy specialist.

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