



A Handbook For Allergy Allies

Spring Allergy Awareness Week 2024

#TOOBIGTOIGNORE



This year's campaign

- Spring Allergy Awareness Week 2024 is an opportunity to raise awareness of allergies
- Allergy UK will be using this week to promote understanding of how allergies are rising at such a rate in the UK, it is now...

#toobigtoignore



Why Too Big To Ignore?

- According to the World Health Organisation, we are on the cusp of a global allergy epidemic.
- The UK has the third highest incidence of allergy in its population in the world
- For decades, we have been warning that our NHS is not meeting the needs of people who live with allergies
- And the problem is going to get worse unless we become more allergy aware....



Reasons to be allergy aware - # 1

1 in 3

People already live with an allergy in the UK



Reasons to be allergy aware - # 2

50%

**of the UK population will have
an allergy by 2026**



Reasons to be allergy aware - # 3

An allergy can be life altering for someone.
The impact is
#toobigtoignore.



Reasons to be allergy aware - # 4



Ignorance around allergies and how serious allergic reactions can be, increase the risk of a fatal reaction.



Reasons to be allergy aware - # 5

We hold the safety of those who live with allergy in our hands. Even unintentional actions can create a harmful environment for someone with an allergy.



Let's not ignore our responsibility any longer.

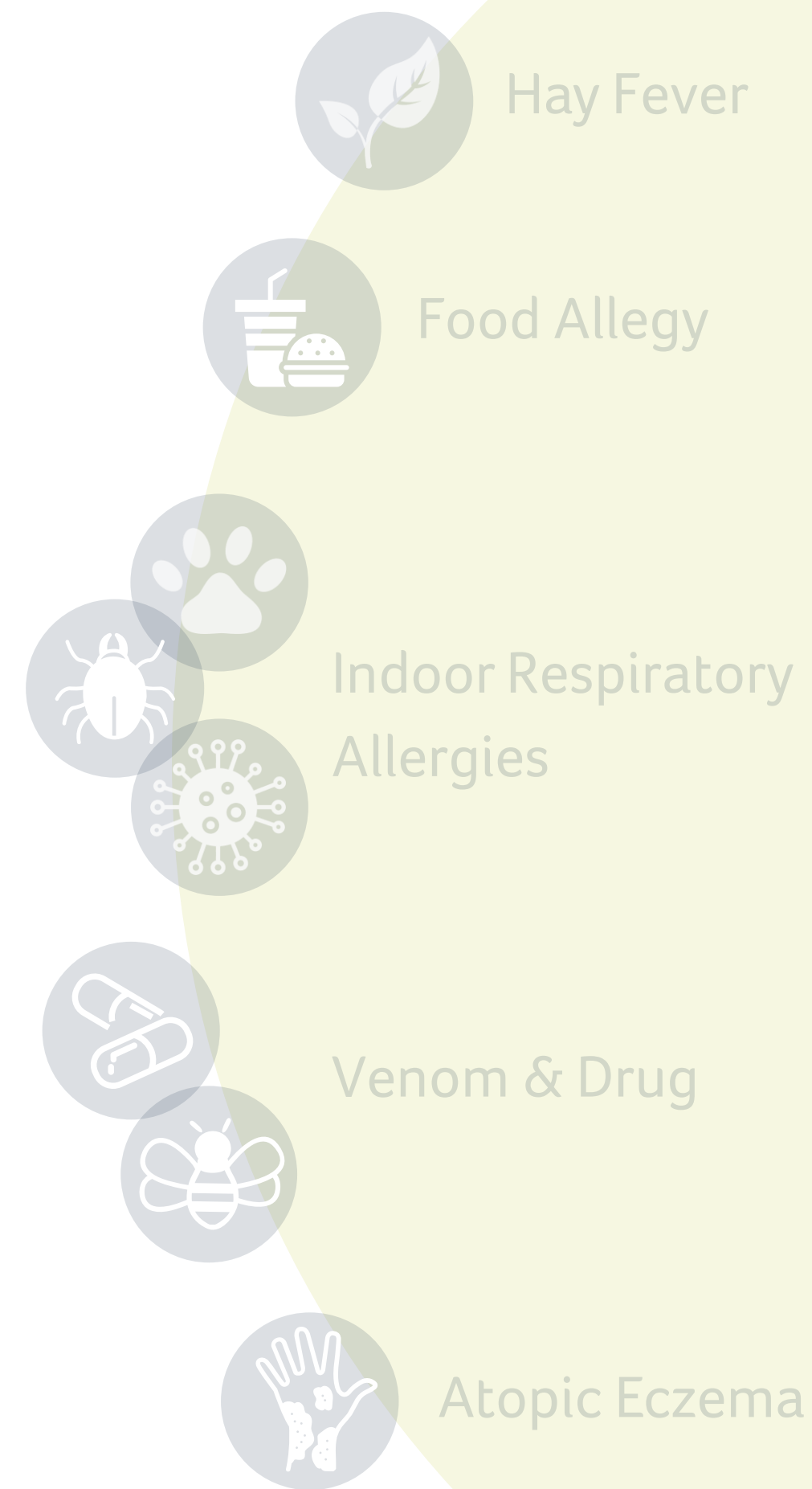


Allergy - why it should matter to you

Allergies are rising at a rate of 5% every year

In 2022 allergy was the most reported chronic health condition in the UK

Our NHS is already struggling to support allergic patients now. 1 allergist consultant per 250,000 patients vs 1 diabetes specialist consultant per 5,436 diabetes patients. Yet, 8% of GP appointments relate to allergy which means people aren't getting the care they need.



Allergy - why it should matter to you

It is just a matter of time before most of us will be living with an allergy.



**Including
you!**



What is an allergy?

An allergy is a body's immune system response to normally harmless substances, such as pollen (hay fever), foods (food allergy), and animal dander (pet allergy).

Whilst in most people these substances (allergens) pose no problem, in allergic individuals their immune system identifies them as a 'threat' and produces an inappropriate response.



What happens to someone in an allergic reaction?

Uncomfortable symptoms but mild

Allergic reactions usually happen quickly and within two hours of exposure to an allergen.



Scan QR code for more information and resources about different types of allergies.



Swelling of the eyes, face and lips



Runny or congested nose



Raised, itchy rash (hives), eczema flare



Itchy mouth



Stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea



Hay Fever



Food Allergy



Indoor Respiratory Allergies



Venom & Drug



Atopic Eczema

What happens to someone in an allergic reaction?

Life threatening and **severe** symptoms

Anaphylaxis is a life threatening severe allergic reaction. It is a medical emergency and requires immediate treatment.



Scan QR code for more information and resources about anaphylaxis



Swollen tongue, hoarse voice or cry, difficulty talking



Chest tightness



Breathing difficulties, persistent cough, wheeze



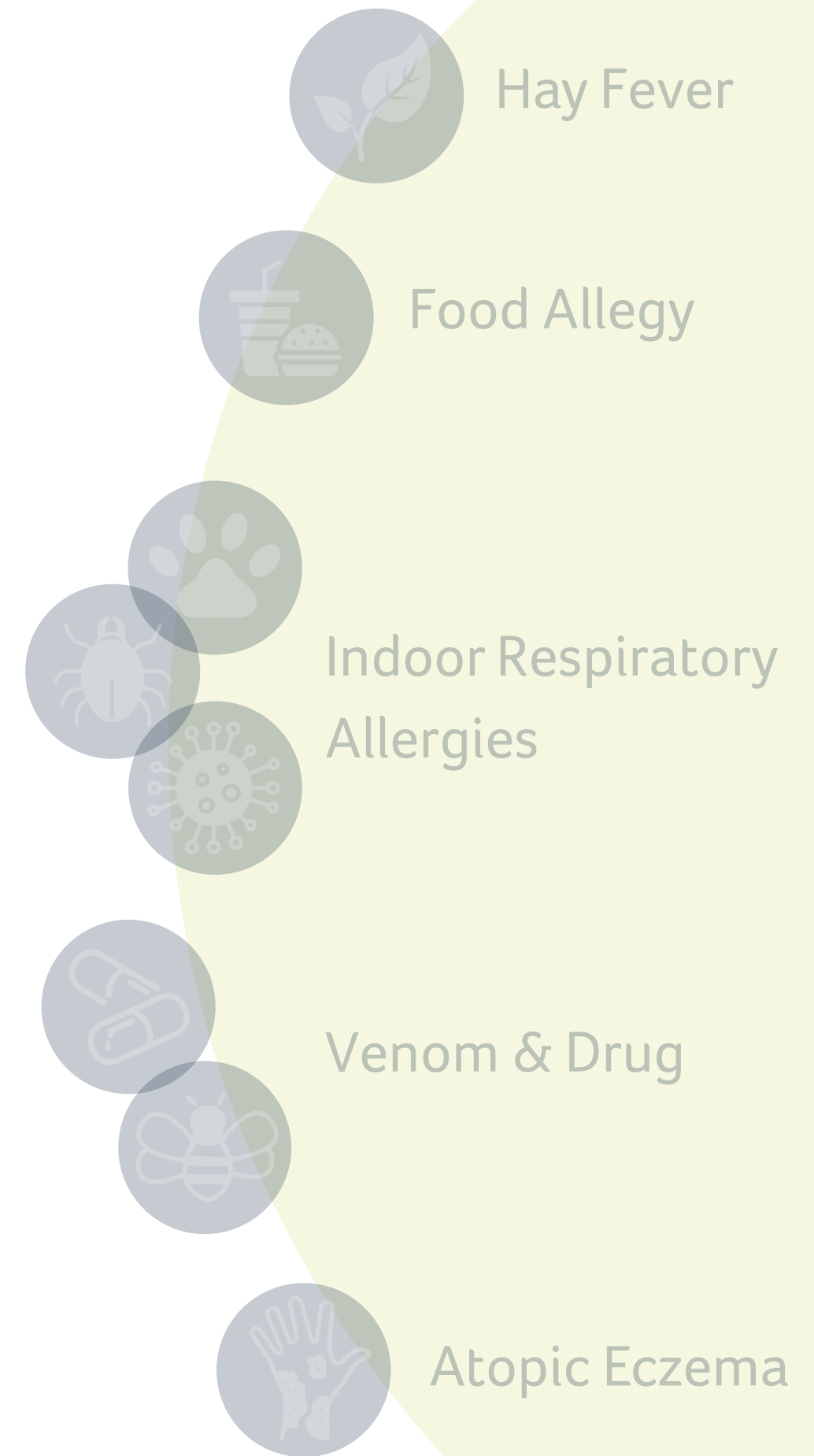
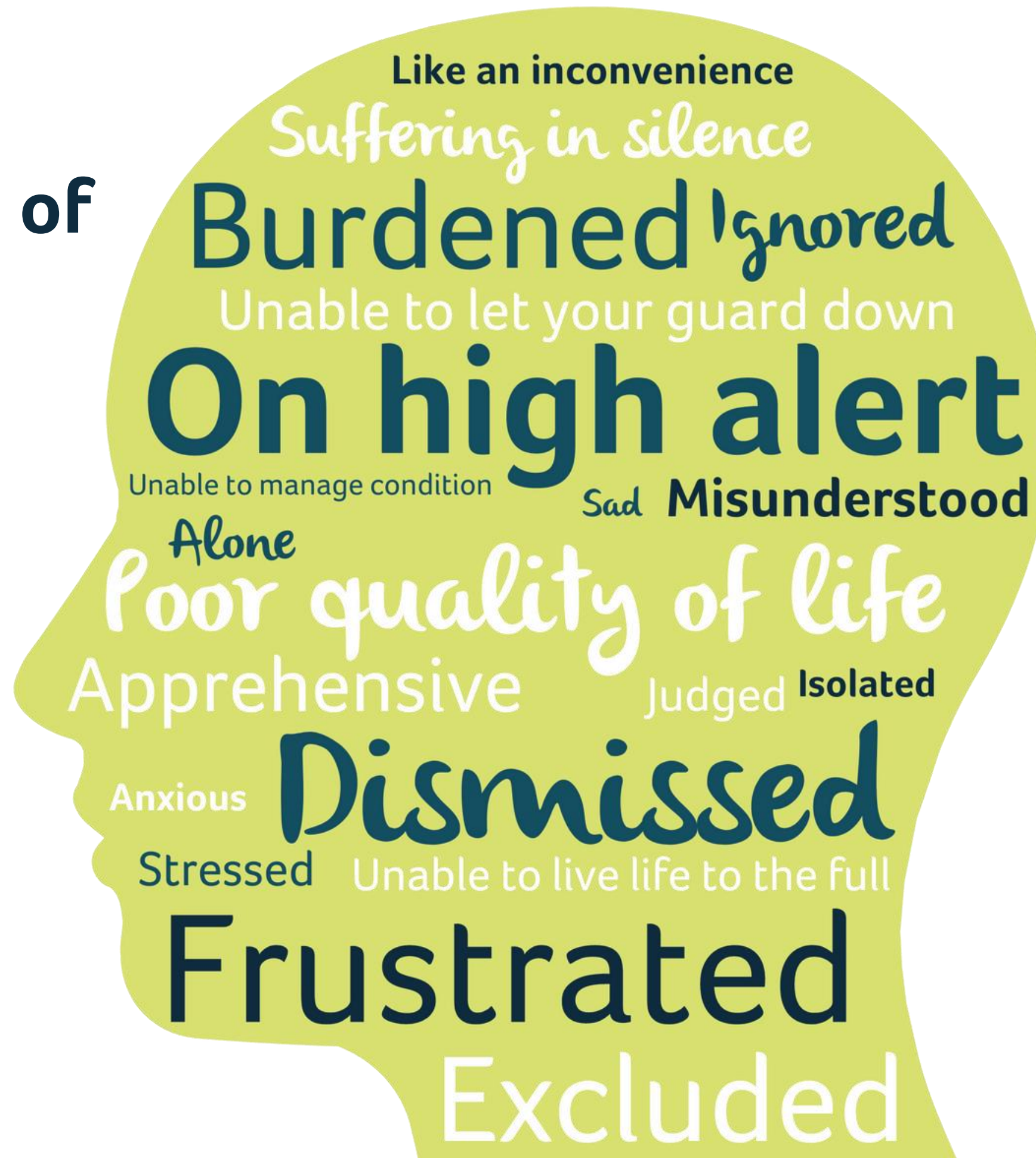
Low blood pressure, feeling faint, collapse



Pale and floppy (babies and small children)



Other impacts of living with an allergy



How you can make a difference:

BE AN ALLERGY ALLY



Allergies are on the rise.

This means we will all be in contact with someone whose daily life is negatively affected by an allergy.

For some, daily life is at risk because of an allergy. But the impact can be reduced if we foster a more compassionate, inclusive, and safer society attitude to allergies.

Thank you for caring enough to want to learn how you can play your part.

Here are some of suggestions from Allergy UK.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simone Miles".

Simone

Miles Allergy UK



Hay fever

Hay fever is caused by an allergy to pollen and results in the nose, eyes, throat and sinuses to become swollen, irritated and inflamed. Pollution can make exposure to pollen even more intense.

This can bring a lot of discomfort.

Being outside can be difficult, and hay fever is known to affect concentration and performance at school and the workplace. Nearly 60% of adults and 90% of children have their sleep disrupted by hay fever and can result in extended tiredness.

In extreme cases, exposure to pollen can trigger dangerous asthma attacks. In 2014, 15% of asthma deaths had hay fever as a contributing factor.



Pollen

Scan QR code
for more information
about hay fever





Tips on how to be supportive

- Spending time outside in the summer isn't for everyone; if you're planning an outdoor event such as a barbecue in months when the pollen count is high, factor in an inside area for your activity. That way those who are severely affected by hay fever can be active participants; probably wise with British weather too!
- Opening windows in shared spaces such as homes, transport, offices and schools, can increase exposure to pollen. Always check before opening.
- Consider if you might be able to run errands for people who are affected by hay fever during high pollen counts. This will reduce the amount of time they need to be exposed.

Scan QR code
for more information
about hay fever

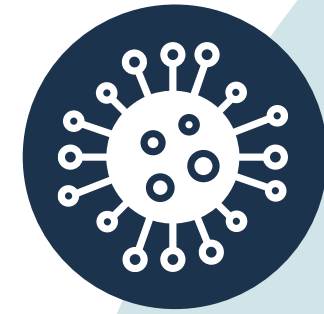


Other airborne allergens

As well as pollen, there are other airborne allergens that can cause allergic reactions. These include, animal dander (material shed from animal coats where the protein to which people are allergic can be found), house dust mites, mould, latex and other substances or chemical compounds used in cleaning and decorating materials.

Like hay fever, it can result in airways, nose, eyes, throat and sinuses becoming swollen, irritated and inflamed.

This can bring a lot of discomfort, also affecting concentration and sleep. Sustained exposure can affect breathing and trigger dangerous asthma attacks and lung damage.



Mould



Pets/Animals



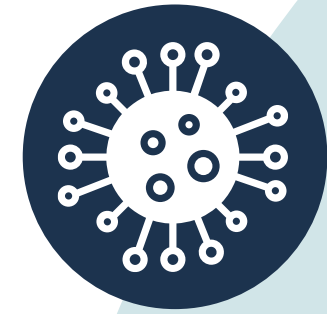
House dust mites

Scan QR code for
more information
about indoor allergies



Tips on how to be supportive

- Air purifiers and dehumidifiers can be effective in reducing exposure to allergens. Circulating fresh air in indoor environments also help to reduce the concentration of allergens.
- If arranging a meeting in a home, be willing to see them in their own home. Someone is likely to have taken precautions to reduce their exposure to their indoor allergens in their living environment.
- Pet dander lingers for a long time. If someone is allergic to your pet such as a dog, check before bringing them. If they see you in your home, not having the pet present will not be enough. Animal dander lingers for up to six weeks without the animal being present.
- Frequent cleaning of home environments is a necessary and time consuming way of life for someone with an indoor allergy and not a reflection of home hygiene levels. Try not to judge.



Mould



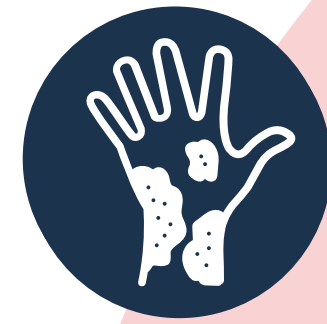
Pets/Animals



House dust mites

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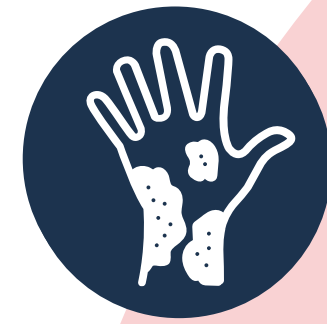
Allergic Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis)

Eczema is an inflammatory skin condition causing itchiness, dry skin, rashes, scaly patches, blisters and skin infections. Although eczema can affect any part of the body, it most often affects the hands, insides of the elbows, backs of the knees and the face and scalp in children. A 2020 report found that nearly 1/3 of people affected experienced skin so sore, it bleeds.

74% of people living with eczema report a negative impact on their mental health. Self-esteem is also affected (70%) and the unpredictability of an eczema flare can be difficult to live with. It can make people reluctant to take part in social occasions (44%), with social isolation a potential consequence. It can also impact someone's ability to work, with reports indicating that up to 50% of adults living with eczema saying it has affected their ability to do paid work.

Scan QR code
for more information
about eczema





Tips on how to be supportive

- Don't offer unsolicited advice on how to manage their condition. Allergic eczema is complex and triggers are very individual to each person.
- Understand if there are last-minute changes to social plans. Eczema is unpredictable, can appear without warning and make someone feel powerless as they attempt to get a flare under control. The mental health impact of eczema often results in those affected, wanting to retreat from social plans.
- Consider if your work, school or home environment is inadvertently triggering someone's allergic eczema. Harsh cleaning detergents and highly perfumed or aerosol air fresheners can be a problem.
- Allow for someone with allergic eczema to have dedicated time in their working or school day to undertake their skin management regime to manage their condition.

Scan QR code
for more information
about eczema



Food allergies

There are now 2 million people living with a food allergy in the UK and the numbers of those affected are growing. In the UK 8% of children live with a food allergy. This is expected to rise.

Food allergies are the most reported allergy in mainstream media because unfortunately, it can cause anaphylaxis, the most serious (and potentially fatal) allergic reaction. In children, the most common fatal food allergy is cow's milk. However, someone can be allergic to any food and any food can lead to anaphylaxis in someone. It is not just cow's milk, nuts or peanuts.

Living with a food allergy can have serious mental health impacts such as PTSD, social isolation, and high anxiety levels for both the individual and their family. Research has also shown that grocery bills can be 14% higher for someone with a food allergy, than someone without.



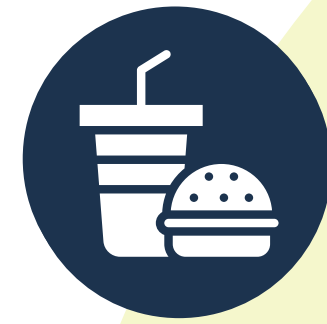
Food

Scan QR code for
more information
about food allergies



Tips on how to be supportive

- Listen and respond to anyone asking about food allergies in a clear and supportive way.
- Be sure to not dismiss their questions or concerns and avoid making assumptions without double-checking all ingredients.
- Never be afraid to ask questions. No one expects you to be an expert but starting a conversation and asking questions shows you care and take food allergies seriously.
- Saving labels is vital. When cooking food for someone with a food allergy, keep the packaging of any pre-bought foods being served so the guest (or, in the case of a child, the parent) can double-check the labelling.
- Remember, you can have an allergy to ANY food. The severity and symptoms can vary from person to person.



Food

Scan QR code for
more information
about food allergies



Should an allergic emergency arise

- Recognise the symptoms of anaphylaxis.
- Call 999 immediately
- Lay them down flat on their backs with their legs raised. DO NOT MOVE THEM.
 - Doing this prevents the blood pressure from dropping and maintains supply to the vital organs e.g. heart, lungs, brain etc.
- Help them find their adrenaline auto-injector (AAI) so they can administer a shot of adrenaline to themselves. If they are unable to administer adrenaline, all AAI's have clear instructions on the side of them to assist anyone that may not know.



Scan QR code for more information and resources about anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is associated with food, venom and drug allergies



Emergency Medication For Anaphylaxis

- Adrenaline auto-injectors (AAIs) are used to inject adrenaline into the thigh muscle.
- Adrenaline counteracts the effect of an allergic reaction by alleviating symptoms and stabilising someone until further medical help can be obtained.
- It's essential for individuals with severe allergies, as well as their caregivers, to know how to use AAI's correctly.



Scan QR code for more information and resources about treating anaphylaxis



Living with a food allergy:

Ella's story

Ella joined her friends for a night out and unexpectedly experienced a severe allergic reaction to food. It was the quick thinking and immediate action taken by one of her friends that ultimately saved Ella's life.

“We could have lost her. And I feel like we nearly did”.

- Sarah, Ella's Mum.



*My life,
your hands*





[Click to view Ella's story](#)

Who is Allergy UK?

Allergy UK is the leading national patient charity for people living with all types of allergy. Our vision is for a world where no one dies from allergy, so we are on a mission to make everyone in the UK take allergy seriously.

Thank you for wanting to be part of this conversation.



How can we help

- We operate a national helpline to give allergy advice and in some instances clinical support to people who are living with an allergy.
- We also support schools, business and organisations in their efforts to be more allergy aware and inclusive.
- Our website www.allergyuk.org is a comprehensive destination for allergy information for patients, healthcare professionals and the general public.





Contact details

Allergy UK's Helpline operates Mon-Fri from 9am-5pm.

01322 619898

info@allergyuk.org

www.allergyuk.org

