

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Allergy basically means a normal protective immune response has gone astray. In doing so such harmful conditions such as asthma and anaphylaxis can occur. It involves white blood cells, eosinophils and a host of chemicals that are capable of killing bacteria and parasites that may invade the body.

Anaphylaxis is a massive immune response that can cause a fall in blood pressure, rapid heart rate, hives, angioedema, asthma and even death. The most common causes are insect stings and food allergies. This is a true medical emergency.

Angioedema (blood vessels that leak) is an exaggerated version of hives that occur deeper under the skin causing massive swelling of the lips, tongue, face, hands and feet. This can be life threatening that needs immediate attention.

Asthma is a condition characterized by bronchospasm and inflammation with thick mucus. This causes coughing, mucus, a suffocating feeling, difficulty talking and limits activity. It characteristically is associated with wheezing. It can be a life threatening condition, but it certainly does cause significant degradation of life quality. There are medications to reverse the bronchospasm and minimize obstruction.

Bronchospasm means the airways become narrowed by muscle contractions. This can cause the wheezing or whistle-like noise that characterizes asthma.

Conjunctivitis means the eyes itch and water. Vision may be impaired as a result. This intense itching is its hallmark.

COPD means Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease is an obstruction of the airway that is not reversible with medication. Cigarette smoking is the primary cause of this condition.

Emphysema is a variant of COPD that means more shortness of breath and less mucus than the Chronic Bronchitis variant.

Food Allergy means a small amount of food can cause a potential life threatening reaction. For example a single peanut can cause death in a sensitive person.

Food Intolerance means a sensitive person cannot tolerate a certain food. The reaction is usually delayed and is not as severe nor life threatening as is food allergy.

Hives are itchy red spots with a pale center. They may have an irregular border and will appear and disappear all over the body.

Immunology is the study of the immune system. When things go awry this system can cause arthritis, diabetes, allergy, asthma, hives and anaphylaxis. This immune system is responsible for protecting our body from infections and other challenges facing us day to day.

Immunotherapy is a process to decrease a person's sensitivity to pollen, dust, and animals in addition to a host of other protein containing substances. It most often requires a series of progressively more concentrated injections. In the future sublingual immunotherapy will become available. This means drops of the causative material is given under the tongue rather than being injected.

Rhinitis means inflammation of the nose resulting in sneezing and itching. It can also result in sinusitis, headaches, ear infections and just plain misery for the sufferer.