

What is a Pediatric Allergist/Immunologist?

If your child suffers from allergies or other problems with his immune system, a *pediatric allergist/immunologist* has special skills to treat your child.

Your child's immune system fights infections. If your child has allergies, her immune system wrongly reacts to things that are usually harmless. Pet dander, pollen, dust, mold spores, insect stings, food, and medications are examples of such things. This reaction may cause her body to respond with health problems such as asthma, hay fever, hives, eczema (a rash), or a very severe and unusual reaction called anaphylaxis.

Sometimes, if your child's immune system is not working right, he may suffer from frequent, severe, and/or uncommon infections. Examples of such infections are sinusitis (inflammation of one or more of the sinuses), pneumonia (infection of the lung), thrush (a fungus infection in the mouth), and abscesses (collections of pus surrounded by inflamed tissue) that keep coming back.

A pediatric allergist/immunologist finds and treats these allergies and immune system problems.

What kind of training do pediatric allergists/immunologists have?

Pediatric allergists/immunologists are medical doctors who have had

- At least 4 years of medical school
- Three years of primary care pediatric residency training
- At least 2 to 3 more years of study in an allergy and immunology program
- Certification from the American Board of Allergy and Immunology

Pediatric allergists/immunologists treat children from birth through the teenage years. Their choice to specialize in pediatric allergy and immunology equips them to provide the most experience in dealing with the unique medical needs of children who have allergies and immune system problems.

What types of treatments do pediatric allergists/immunologists provide?

Pediatric allergists/immunologists generally provide treatment for the following:

- Asthma
- Hay fever (allergic rhinitis)
- Sinusitis
- Eczema (atopic dermatitis)
- Hives (urticaria, welts)
- Severe reactions to foods, insect stings, and medications (anaphylaxis)
- Immune disorders that lead to the following:
 - Frequent sinusitis, pneumonia, or diarrhea
 - Thrush and abscesses that keep coming back
 - Severe, unusual infections

Pediatric allergists/immunologists diagnose allergic conditions by using special testing. Newer forms of these tests may be almost painless. Treatment may combine avoiding things that cause symptoms, immunotherapy (allergy shots), or medication. Tests and effective treatments also are available for various causes of a weakened immune system.

Where can I find a pediatric allergist/immunologist?

Pediatric allergists/immunologists practice in a variety of medical settings. These include children's hospitals, university medical centers, large community hospitals, and private offices. Ask your pediatrician or a local children's hospital to help you find an allergist/immunologist who works with children.

Pediatric allergists/immunologists — specialized care for children

Children are not just small adults. They cannot always tell us what is bothering them. They cannot always answer medical questions. They are not always able to be patient and cooperative during a medical examination.

Pediatric allergists/immunologists know how to examine and treat children in a way that helps them relax and cooperate. Their goal is to identify the causes of these disorders in your child, and to offer ways to decrease symptoms so that your child can live a healthier life.

If your pediatrician suggests that your child see a pediatric allergist/immunologist, you can be assured that she will get expert care. That care will include the most up-to-date treatment and therapy options to improve your child's quality of life.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor

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of Pediatrics



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