

# **Southwest Allergy & Asthma Center**

## **Seed Allergy**

### **What is a seed allergy?**

Seed allergy is an abnormal immune reaction to the proteins found in a type of seed, such as sesame, poppy, pumpkin or mustard.

### **Is seed allergy common?**

These types of allergy are not very common in children or adults. The prevalence is unknown but may be increasing. Sesame seed is the most common seed allergy. Sunflower seed and pumpkin seed allergy seem to be much less common.

### **What are the symptoms of an allergic reaction to a seed?**

Classic allergic reactions usually include a red, itchy rash called hives that occurs within minutes of ingesting foods containing the food allergen. Hives can progress to or occur as part of a more serious allergic reaction, called anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening allergic reaction that may include any of the following symptoms: wheezing or other breathing problems; vomiting, diarrhea or stomach cramps; face, mouth, or throat swelling; or signs of shock, including low blood pressure, dizziness, and passing out.

### **Do people outgrow seed allergy?**

In most individuals the allergy will probably be lifelong. As these allergies are not as common as other types of allergy the natural history is not as well described.

### **What things should I avoid?**

If you are allergic to a type of seed, you should avoid eating that type of seed and may need to avoid other types of seeds. In addition you should avoid foods that may have been contaminated with or have come into contact with the concerning food.

## **Is cross contamination a concern?**

Many foods are inadvertently contaminated with seed products during their processing or preparation. Any foods prepared in a facility that handles seeds are at risk for being contaminated.

## **How and when can I reintroduce a seed?**

You should consult with your physician regarding when and how to reintroduce a seed into you or your child's diet. Your physician may use skin or blood tests to determine if it is safe to reintroduce the seed into the diet.

## **Is my child allergic to all seeds?**

Individuals with a seed allergy may tolerate other types of seeds. You should check with your healthcare provider to determine which seeds are safe to eat.

## **Do seeds cross-react with nuts?**

Seeds are often used as a substitute for nuts as cross-reactivity is not currently believed to be a major concern. Individuals with seed allergies are at increased risk for other food allergies, including peanut and tree nut allergies. Some reports suggest that 50% or more of people with sesame seed allergy may have a separate nut allergy.

## **Is it safe to breast-feed my child?**

Breast-feeding is generally safe in children with a seed allergy if the mother avoids foods containing the concerning seed.