

# Hidden disabilities

# Allergy

## Reasonable Adjustments



It is estimated that **1 in 4** people in the UK suffer from an allergy at some point in their life.

An allergy is an adverse reaction which the body has to a particular food or substance.

The most common substances causing an allergy include: pollen, animal hair and food.



Asthma, often caused by animal dander (tiny flakes of hair or skin), is listed separately.

Most allergic reactions are mild, but can still cause:

- itchy eyes;
- sneezing;
- wheezing; and
- skin rashes and swelling.



A mild allergic reaction can often be treated with antihistamine medicine.

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A small number of people suffer a severe allergic reaction called “anaphylaxis”. Anaphylaxis can be life threatening.



This is usually caused by certain food, insect stings or drugs.

Symptoms come on very quickly and can include: swelling of the face; feeling of tightness around the throat; tingling mouth or lips; colicky pains in the abdomen; feeling sick; and, nettle rash or hives.



When the reaction is more severe and involves anaphylaxis, it can include swelling around the throat, wheezing, a sense of impending doom, a fast heart rate and low blood pressure causing faintness or light-headedness, and even loss of consciousness.



A more serious reaction will require an adrenaline injection, and people with severe allergies usually carry an adrenaline injector around with them.

Allergic rhinitis, i.e. hay fever, is excluded from the definition of “disability” in the Equality Act unless it aggravates the effect of any other condition, e.g. asthma.

Allergies with only very mild effects are unlikely to be covered by the definition of disability.

More serious effects could have a substantial adverse effect in a workplace, even if they are not as severe as anaphylactic shock. For example if a worker cannot stop sneezing and their eyes keep running, that would interfere with their ability to read, look at a computer screen and concentrate.

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**Work Place Reasonable Adjustments: what you and your colleagues can do at your workplace**



**1. Always consult the individual.**



**2. Make adjustments depending on the severity and nature of the worker's condition.**



**3. Ensure that the worker does not come into contact with the relevant allergen during their work or on work-related activities.**



**4. Where there is a nut allergy:**

**Put up signs stating that nuts must not be eaten in the workplace and explain why (with the worker's permission).**



**Have an emergency action plan if the worker accidentally comes into contact with nuts and becomes ill.**



**Allow home working.**

**Allow the worker to eat at their desk rather than in the canteen.**

