



STAY HEALTHY ONBOARD GUIDE

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Allergies



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INTRODUCTION

Overview

Allergy is when the human body reacts to something which is normally not dangerous, such as dust, but considers it harmful. Symptoms can be mild, but in some cases very severe. Allergies might be seasonal or year-round.

There are seven types of allergies:

- Drug allergy
- Food allergy
- Insect allergy
- Latex allergy
- Mold allergy
- Pet allergy
- Pollen allergy (Hay Fever)

According to the Food Allergen Labelling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004, the major food allergies are milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, and sesame.

Due to climate change, higher pollen concentrations appear in the atmosphere. Pollen grains dispersed from flowers, trees, grass, and weeds and they are almost invisible. Exposure to pollen, results in several allergic reactions, such as allergic rhinitis, and allergic conjunctivitis.



SYMPTOMS OF ALLERGIC REACTIONS

Allergies, usually cause inflammation and irritation.

The allergic reactions vary according to the allergy type, and are mentioned below:

Dust and Pollen Allergy

- Blocked or congested nose
- Itchy eyes and nose
- Runny nose
- Swollen, watery eyes
- Cough

Food Allergy

- Vomiting
- Swollen tongue
- Tingling in mouth
- Swelling of the lips, face, throat
- Stomach cramps
- Breath shortness
- Itchiness in mouth
- Diarrhoea

Insect Allergy

- Wheezing
- Swelling at the site of sting
- Sudden blood pressure decrease
- Itchy skin
- Breath shortness
- Restlessness
- Hives
- Dizziness
- Cough
- Chest tightness

Drug Allergy

- Wheezing
- Swelling of tongue, lips, face
- Rash
- Itchiness

***** VERY IMPORTANT *****

Having asthma might trigger or worsen allergy symptoms. If symptoms get worsen and left untreated, anaphylaxis might occur.

ANAPHYLAXIS

Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening reaction which comes on rapidly and can be fatal if left untreated.

Symptoms appear within minutes or few hours after eating a certain food, taking a medication, or stung by an insect, and include the following:

- **Breathing symptoms:** wheezing, shortness of breath, throat tightness, cough, hoarse voice, chest pain/tightness, trouble swallowing, itchy mouth/throat, nasal stuffiness/congestion
- **Circulation symptoms:** pale/blue colour, low pulse, dizziness, light-headedness/passing out, low blood pressure, shock, loss of consciousness
- **Skin symptoms:** hives, swelling, itch, warmth, redness, rash
- **Stomach symptoms:** nausea, pain/cramps, vomiting, diarrhoea
- **Other symptoms:** anxiety, feeling of impending doom, itchy/red/watery eyes, headache, cramping of the uterus

Immediate medical treatment is necessary. In some cases, symptoms might disappear and return a few hours later so they should not be left untreated.

Tips for avoiding anaphylaxis!

- ✓ The right allergy care is very important!
- ✓ Be careful with foods, medications, and insects if sensitive to allergies.
- ✓ Be aware of anaphylaxis risk and management if sensitive to allergies.



COMMON ALLERGIES ON BOARD

Contact Dermatitis

In 2021, there were several recorded cases of contact dermatitis on board. Contact dermatitis is a type of eczema which can be triggered by contact with an irritant or an allergen, resulting in red itchy rash. Metals, such as nickel, cosmetic products, chemicals or paints, fragrances and preservatives are certain allergens which can cause allergic contact dermatitis.

Food Allergies

Food allergies on board, are challenging but can be managed with proper communication between crew members and galley crew. Chief cooks should be well aware of any crew members with food allergies on board, at all times. Nut allergies, especially to peanuts and tree nuts such as almonds, walnuts, and cashews, can be common on board. Nuts can be found in various food products, and cross-contamination can occur in galley settings.

Dust Allergy

Vessels with confined spaces with limited ventilation may lead to increased dust and mold on board. Crew members who are sensitive to these allergens may experience respiratory symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, wheezing, or difficult breathing.

Pollen Allergy

When ships dock in ports or pass through coastal areas, crew members may be exposed to various types of pollen which may cause an allergic reaction.

Chemical Sensitivities

Crew members on board may develop sensitivities or allergies to certain chemicals or cleaning products used on board. These include cleaning solvents, detergents, paints, or other industrial chemicals. Symptoms can range from skin irritation to respiratory distress.

STEPS FOR MANAGING PREVENTION ON BOARD

Good practices on board can prevent common allergies on board.

✓ **Wear Protective Gear**

When working in environments exposed to allergens, such as handling certain chemicals, is crucial to wear protective gloves, masks, or goggles, to minimize contact and inhalation of allergens.

✓ **Maintain Good Hygiene**

Practice good personal hygiene by regularly washing hands and keeping living space clean. This will help with minimizing exposure to allergens and prevent cross-contamination.

✓ **Avoid Allergens**

Avoiding allergens as much as possible is crucial to minimize allergic reactions on board. Remember that chief cooks should be informed in case of food allergies in order to take extra caution when preparing the meals.

Note: Certain medications such as antihistamine are usually available on board at all times to manage allergy symptoms.

✓ **Keep a Diary**

Keeping a diary to write down foods consumed with quantities, and symptoms, will help with identifying what causes or worsens symptoms.

✓ **Good Ventilation**

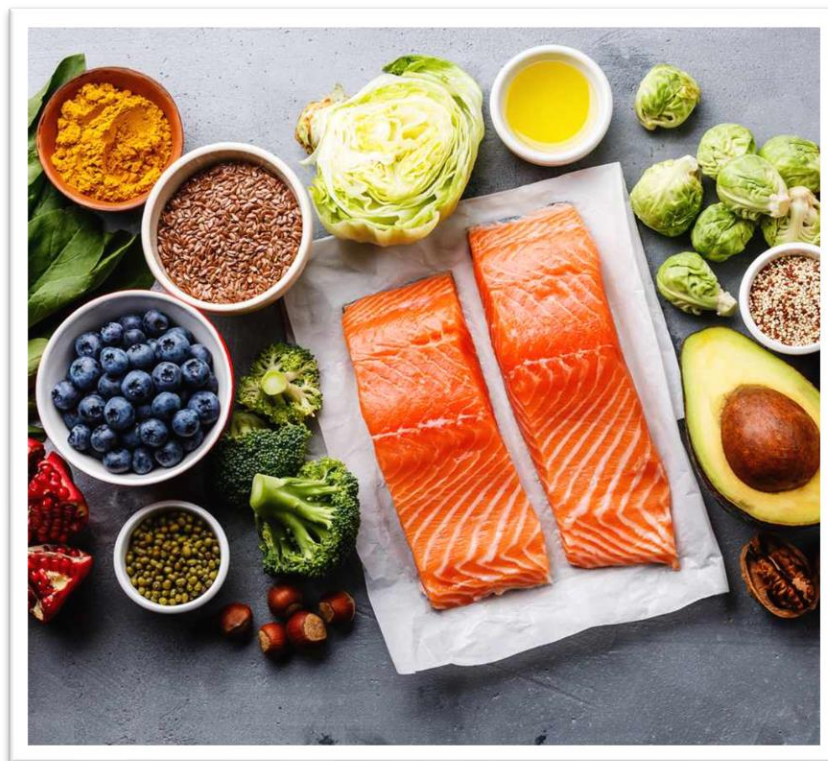
Ensure proper ventilation by opening windows, when possible, to help reducing the concentration of allergens on air, and maintain optimal humidity levels.

✓ **Follow a Healthy Diet**

Consuming a well-balanced diet which includes plenty of fruits and vegetables can help boost the immune system and reduce the risk of allergic reactions.

Specific food items that might help with allergies:

- *Ginger* which has anti-inflammatory properties.
- *Citrus fruits* (orange, grapefruit, lemon, limes) contain a lot of vitamin C which boosts the immune system.
- *Turmeric* which has anti-inflammatory properties.
- *Tomatoes* which contain a lot of vitamin C.
- *Oily fish* such as sardines contain omega-3 fatty acids which may help with allergy resistance and improve asthma.



PROPER USE OF CHEMICAL HAZARDS

Chemicals used for the cleaning or maintenance of the galley might be harmful and result to burns or skin and eyes irritation.

Below tips refer to proper protective precautions to avoid adverse effects:



- ✓ Ensure that **chemicals are stored safely** on designated areas, separately from food items to avoid cross-contamination.
- ✓ Ensure chemicals are **properly labelled** to avoid harmful mixes.
- ✓ **Avoid mixing acids** (pH lower than 7) with bases (pH higher than 7), for instance, mixing caustic soda with bleach, as this may produce toxic gases or even an explosion.
- ✓ Keep all **chemicals away from cooking and prepping surfaces**, especially when food is present.
- ✓ Crew members responsible, should be **well aware of the proper use of all chemicals** in the galley.
- ✓ **Manufacturer's instructions should be followed** in order to use the appropriate chemical for each purpose, and apply the methods and quantities specified.
- ✓ Ensure all crew members have easy access to **Safety Data Sheets** which are always up to date.
- ✓ All crew members should attend **training courses**, if necessary, on proper usage or handling hazardous substances.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT

Cleaning products are essential for maintaining healthy conditions on board. However, they might contain chemicals that irritate eyes, skin, or lungs.

- Cleaning products are released on the environment when used.
- Certain ingredients in cleaning products can be hazardous to humans or to aquatic species.

For instance, alkylphenol ethoxylates, is a common ingredient in cleaning products which studies confirm to cause endocrine disruption resulting in reproductive effects of wildlife types exposed to such polluted waters.

- The biodegradation of surfactants used in cleaning products is slow and usually happens onto a toxic, persistent, and bio accumulative chemicals which threaten marine species.
- Ingredients in cleaning products which contain phosphorus or nitrogen may lead to adverse effects on water quality.
- Volatile organic compounds can negatively affect the indoor air quality, forming a smog in outdoor air.





Oceanic's Suggestions:

- ✓ Follow a healthy and well-balanced diet!
- ✓ Always wear protective gear when needed!
- ✓ Maintain a good hygiene!
- ✓ Keep a diary to record food that might trigger allergy symptoms!
- ✓ Use chemical hazards properly!



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