

Allergy Statistics

- More than 50 million Americans suffer from allergic diseases.¹ A recent nationwide survey found that more than half (54.6 percent) of all U.S. citizens test positive to one or more allergens; among specific allergens, dust mite, rye, ragweed or cockroach caused sensitization in approximately 25 percent of the population.²
- Allergies are the sixth leading cause of chronic disease in the United States, costing the health care system \$18 billion annually.¹
- Two estimates of prevalence of allergic rhinoconjunctivitis (hay fever) in the United States are 9 percent³ and 16 percent.⁴ The prevalence of allergic rhinitis has increased substantially over the past 15 years.⁵
- In 2002, approximately 14 million office visits to health care providers were attributed to allergic rhinitis.⁶
- Estimates of the prevalence of allergy to latex allergens in the general population vary widely, from less than 1 percent to 6 percent.^{7,8}
- Certain individuals, including health care workers who wear latex gloves and children with spina bifida who have had multiple surgical procedures, are at particularly high risk for allergic reactions to latex. Atopic individuals (those with allergies) are at an increased risk of developing latex allergy.⁷
- Atopic dermatitis is one of the most common skin diseases, particularly in infants and children. The estimated prevalence in the United States varies from 9 percent to 30 percent.^{10,11} The prevalence of atopic dermatitis appears to be increasing.^{12,13}
- Health care provider visits for contact dermatitis and other eczemas, which include atopic dermatitis, are 7 million per year.¹⁴
- Chronic sinusitis is the most commonly reported chronic disease, affecting 16.3 percent of people (nearly 32 million) in the United States in 1997.³
- In 1996, estimated U.S. health care expenditures attributable to sinusitis were approximately \$5.8 billion.¹⁵
- Experts estimate food allergy occurs in 6 percent to 8 percent of children 4 years of age or under, and in 4 percent of adults.^{16,21} Approximately 150 Americans, usually adolescents and young adults, die annually from food-induced anaphylaxis.¹⁶
- Peanut or tree nut allergies affect approximately 0.6 percent and 0.4 percent of Americans, respectively, and cause the most severe food-induced allergic reactions.¹⁸
- Allergic drug reactions account for 5 percent to 10 percent of all adverse drug reactions, with skin reaction being the most common form.¹
- Penicillin is a common cause of drug allergy. Approximately 7 percent of normal volunteers react to penicillin allergy skin tests (IgE antibodies).¹⁹ While the true number of deaths from drug reactions is unknown, anaphylactic reactions to penicillin occur in 32 of every 100,000 exposed patients.⁹
- Acute urticaria (hives) is common, affecting 10 percent to 20 percent of the population at some time in their lives. Half of those affected continue to have symptoms for more than 6 months.¹
- Allergy to venom of stinging insects (honeybees, wasps, hornets, yellow jackets and fire ants) is relatively common, with prevalence of systemic reactions in 3 percent of American and 1 percent of children.²⁰ Between 40

and 100 Americans have been reported to die annually from anaphylaxis to insects, although this number may be markedly underestimated.⁸

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