

Oral Allergy Syndrome

Patient information

ALLERGOLOGY

- **The symptoms:** itching and/or swelling of the mouth/throat when eating specific fruits and/or types of vegetables. In most cases, the symptoms are mild and disappear within 30 minutes.
- **The cause:** this food allergy is caused by a cross-allergy with pollen (hay fever). Stone fruits, nuts, and vegetables can cause symptoms.
- **The treatment:** avoiding or heating the stone fruits, nuts, and vegetables that cause symptoms.

What is oral allergy?

Often, patients develop the most common food allergy in the Netherlands overnight. The symptoms often occur immediately after eating stone fruits (such as apples), certain nuts (such as hazelnuts), or vegetables (such as tomatoes) The symptoms often disappear within 30 minutes.

The symptoms can consist of:

- itching in the mouth/palate
- tingling and/or swelling of the lips, mouth, and throat
- itchy eyes and nasal symptoms, such as a runny nose and sneezing
- sometimes: stomach issues, such as nausea

In extremely rare cases, the symptoms can progress to more severe forms of an allergic reaction, such itchy rash all over the body or shock.

How do I develop an allergy to fruits, nuts, and vegetables?

The cause of this allergy should be sought in hay fever (pollen allergy). Your body is then filled with antibodies against pollen, which consists of proteins. Nearly identical proteins are found in fruits and nuts. As a result, you can eventually also develop allergic reactions to nuts and fruit. This is called a cross-allergy. This type of cross-allergy, also known as Oral Allergy Syndrome, often develops over the course of life (one must first develop hay fever). That is why Oral Allergy Syndrome can occur from childhood to beyond retirement age. About 15-30% of patients with hay fever (especially those allergic to tree pollen) eventually develop this form of food allergy. Unfortunately, it appears that Oral Allergy Syndrome cannot be prevented.

What can I react to?

The symptoms can thus occur when eating stone fruits, nuts, and certain vegetables (see the table). However, you can also react to many other plant-based products. Therefore, the table is not complete. Which foods cause symptoms varies from patient to patient. You do not need to avoid all the mentioned foods. Identifying which foods trigger symptoms is a matter of trial and error. Generally, you may experience symptoms throughout the year. Sometimes, symptoms are worse during hay fever season.

How do I know if I have a cross-allergy, and is it treatable?

The diagnosis is based on the patient's story. Positive tests for tree pollen and/or grass pollen confirm the diagnosis. Unfortunately, additional testing for food allergies is in most cases not meaningful. The tests often do not provide reliable results. Treatment consists of avoiding fruits, nuts, and/or vegetables that trigger a reaction. Traces or small amounts are not a problem. Unfortunately, cross-allergies cannot be cured. Fortunately, the symptoms are generally not severe. Often, you may 'forget' that you have this allergy. Nonetheless, the symptoms can be bothersome. If the symptoms are troublesome, you can take a hay fever tablet. Carrying an adrenaline pen is not necessary.

Why can I still eat apple pie then?

The proteins to which someone reacts are 'thermolabile'. This means they lose their structure when heated or (strongly) cooled. Consequently, these heated and processed fruits and vegetables do not cause symptoms. Therefore, you do not need to worry about reacting to dishes containing these food items, such as apple pie.

Tip:

Research has shown that people who experience mild symptoms can eat apples if these have been briefly pre-treated in the microwave. This apple (optional: sliced) was microwaved for 1 minute (at 750 watts) and then cooled for at least 15-30 minutes.

Most common food items that cause oral allergy symptoms:					
Potato	Apricot	Almond	Pineapple	Apple	Banana
Hazelnut	Cherry	Kiwi (green)	Melon	Nectarine	Paprika
Brazil nut	Pear	Peach	Peanut	Plum	Celery
Soy	Tomato	Walnut	Carrot		

Insurance coverage

DC Klinieken has contracts with all health insurers. This means that almost all healthcare costs are covered, similar to the hospital. However, you will need a referral from your general practitioner. Please be aware of your insurance excess. For more information about reimbursement and possible exceptions, please visit: www.dcklinieken.nl/vergoedingen.

Questions

For more information and answers to frequently asked questions, please visit: www.dcklinieken.nl/contact or contact our Service and Information Centre at +31 (0) 88 0100 900.

Emergency after visiting DC Klinieken

In case of emergency, call: +31 (0) 88 0100 998.

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