

THE ALLERGY & ASTHMA CLINIC

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NEWSLETTER

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Happy Valentines Day! If kissing leaves you tingly, is it love or allergies?

“Kissing” allergies are most commonly found in people who have food or medication allergies. Symptoms can include swelling of the lips or throat, rash, hives, itching and wheezing. Food allergies affect about 2-3% of adults and 5-7% of children in the US population accounting for more than 7 million people, according to the ACAAI .

Even brushing your teeth or waiting hours after eating may not prevent some partners of people with food and medicine allergies from triggering an allergic reaction through a kiss, according to experts at the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI), of which both Dr. Engler and Dr. Zhang are members.

According to allergist Sami Bahna, MD, past President of the ACAAI, if you have food allergies, having an allergic reaction immediately after kissing someone who has eaten the food or taken oral medication that you are allergic to isn't highly unusual. Some patients even react after their partner has brushed their teeth or several hours after eating. It has been found that their partners' saliva is excreting the allergen hours after the food or medicine has been absorbed by their body.

During one of Dr. Bahna's presentations, an example of a 30 year old male with a peanut allergy who had recurrent anaphylaxis - which is a life-threatening allergic reaction - was discussed. This patient developed lip swelling and itching in his mouth when his girlfriend kissed him. It was discovered later that she had eaten peanuts two hours earlier and even though she brushed her teeth, rinsed her mouth and chewed gum prior to seeing him, it still wasn't enough to protect him.

So what are lovebirds to do? It is recommended that the non-allergic partner brush their teeth, rinse their mouth and avoid the offending food for 16-24 hours before smooching with a person who is highly allergic to that food. But even these steps may not help in some cases.

According to the ACAAI, there may be more who are suffering from this than it is known

because people may be embarrassed to bring it up. But we can help determine what's causing the allergy and find the right treatment so no one has to needlessly suffer.

Interestingly, it's not always the “obvious” food which is causing the problem. We've had quite a number of cases where the testing to the suspected food was negative, despite a very high level of suspicion. So often, it's almost as important to know what you're not allergic to as it is to know what you are. After all, why give up that delicious piece of mouth watering dark chocolate if it turns out it's the almonds in the chocolate that are causing the problem and not the chocolate itself?

If you or someone you love is experiencing these or other symptoms you think could be related to an allergy, please feel free to contact our office and speak to us. We can help you identify the allergy, discuss therapy options such as appropriate lifestyle changes, preventative medications (for some cases) as well as many other options, including determining whether you are a candidate for desensitization to help you become less allergic.

Patching up your skin with Patch Testing!

Allergic Contact Dermatitis is a skin condition that occurs when your immune systems reacts to a chemical that is found in a product with which you come in contact. The contact can occur anywhere, including at home or work. Allergic Contact Dermatitis (ACD) symptoms include itchiness, redness, cracking or flaking of the skin, or fluid-filled blisters. It can occur anywhere on the body, and it is different than Atopic Dermatitis (eczema), although it is possible to have both skin conditions simultaneously. ACD is frequently caused by a chemical found in products or objects that you regularly use such as soap, lotion, sunscreen, cosmetics, perfume, sports equipment, shoes, or even clothing. You may have used a product for years without any problem, but at some point along the way, your immune system develops a sensitivity to this product. Once you develop an allergy to a particular chemical your immune system will usually react to that substance for a very long time, often the rest of your life. You may try to switch products on your own; however,

many products contain similar chemicals so even if you switch to a different lotion or shampoo your skin stills reacts to the new product because it still contains that allergy causing chemical. In order to best treat your rash it is important to identify which chemical or substance is causing the problem so that you can avoid products that contain this substance in the future.

Our office is able to perform Patch Testing which can help to identify which chemical(s) may be causing your skin symptoms. At your first Patch Testing appointment, we will put a series of panels on your back, which you will then wear at home for 48 hours. There are several substances in these panels that are commonly known to cause allergic contact dermatitis such as nickel sulfate, Parabens, fragrances and wool alcohols. In addition, we can usually prepare additional testing panels to check for specific substances about which you or we have a high level of suspicion. You will be asked to return for 2 additional office visits during a 1 week period, at which time we will evaluate your test results and discuss them with you. We will also discuss how to identify which products contain the substances you are allergic to and talk about some medication options to help improve your rash more quickly. Patch testing is usually very well tolerated and side effects are minimal, but can include some itchiness at the test site. You may take oral antihistamines during the Patch Test to help with any itchiness you may experience.

In the last few months, we have diagnosed quite a number of cases of contact dermatitis, ranging from makeups used by television personnel which prevented them from going on the air, suture materials used during surgery that prevented wound healing, various soaps and cleansers used on a daily basis which suddenly started causing problems and various articles of clothing that suddenly started causing mysterious rashes. If you, or someone you know, has a persistent rash and you suspect that it could be Allergic Contact Dermatitis, please get in touch with our office for an evaluation. The test is simple and it can make a world of difference in your skin!

**In observance of President's
Day the office will be closed
Monday, February 20th.**