Self-Care Corner

Allergy or asthma? Know the difference

Allergies are caused by an over-reaction of the immune system to certain substances (called allergens) in the air (pollen, dust mites, for example), eaten (such as peanuts or shrimp), injected (like a bee sting or certain medicines), or touched (poison ivy or latex are good examples), according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.

Symptoms of an allergy may be some or all of these:

- Sneezing
- Runny nose (clear discharge)
- Itchy nose or throat
- Coughing
- Skin rashes or hives

Asthma occurs when airways become temporarily blocked or narrowed because of exposure to allergens, irritants, strenuous exercise, anxiety, or other triggers. If an asthma attack is severe, a person may need emergency treatment.

Asthma symptoms can include some or all of these:

- Sudden shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Tight chest
- Wheezing or coughing

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