In Singapore, allergies like atopic dermatitis (eczema) now affect around 1 in 5 children.

Read on to find out more about allergies.

Reference:
What is allergy?

An allergy is a reaction by the immune system to a substance that is harmless to others. Allergies can cause swelling, itching, rashes, runny nose, or wheezing.1 These symptoms are related to allergic diseases such as food allergies, eczema, asthma, and allergic rhinitis. A family history of allergies is the single most important factor that puts you at risk.

Reference:
Eczema is a chronic skin condition that results in red, dry and itchy skin. It is also called atopic dermatitis. It can be caused by other diseases, irritating substances, allergies and is related to your genetic makeup. The most common type of eczema is atopic dermatitis - an allergic condition that is most common in infants and children. Children with atopic dermatitis tend to develop other allergic diseases such as asthma, rhinitis or food allergies.

Reference:
Wheezing

Asthma is a chronic lung disease characterised by coughing, chest tightness, shortness of breath and wheezing. The role of allergy in asthma is greater in children than in adults. When children experience asthma symptoms, inflamed airways become narrowed, making it more difficult to breathe. Asthma exacerbations may be triggered by viral respiratory tract infections or exposure to irritants like tobacco smoke.

Reference:
Sneezing, runny nose

Allergic rhinitis may be seasonal or year-round. This seasonal allergy is often called “hay fever”. In the tropics, where there are no pollen seasons, symptoms are year-round. They may be caused by exposure to indoor allergens such as dust mites, indoor molds or pets. The symptoms include sneezing, stuffy or runny nose and itching in the nose, eyes or on the roof of the mouth.

Reference:
Food allergies is an abnormal response to a food allergen triggered by the body’s immune system. In infants and young children, some common food allergens are cow’s milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soybeans and wheat. Food allergy symptoms include itching or swelling in your mouth, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal cramps and pain, eczema and tightening of throat. In severe cases, it can result in life-threatening reactions.

Reference:
Family history has been found to be important in determining allergy risk. Babies are more likely to develop allergies if there’s a history of eczema, asthma, hay fever or food allergies (known together as atopy) in the family.

* Not medically diagnosed with any form of allergic disease
Primary prevention of allergies has been extensively studied with a goal to prevent the onset of allergic diseases in newborns. These measures are recommended for families with atopy, however, the reality is that despite parents’ efforts to diligently follow the recommendations, children could still develop allergies.

Check out what the experts agreed based on the current understanding.
• Eat a healthy balanced diet with plentiful fluid (8-10 glasses).

• Avoidance of highly allergenic food in pregnancy is not recommended as a measure for preventing allergic disease because it has not been shown to be useful and may be detrimental as it has the potential to compromise the nutrition of both the mother and fetus.

• Maternal smoking in pregnancy is highly discouraged as it affects the lung development of the fetus.

• Avoidance of environmental house dust mite exposure in pregnancy has not been shown to be useful.

If you want to get more information on allergies, please log-on to the Asthma & Allergy Association [http://aaa.org.sg/aboutus.htm]
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Breastfeeding is recommended for at least 6 months for many reasons and is encouraged to continue it for as long as possible.

If infant formula is required in the first months of life before solid foods are introduced, there is some evidence that hypoallergenic formulas, otherwise known as partially hydrolysed formula*, may reduce the risk of eczema in high risk infants.

Weaning to semisolids should be delayed until at least 4 months and commenced by 6 months of age.

Parental smoking is discouraged because of the potential harm of secondary smoke.

Avoid exposing your child to cigarette smoke in confined spaces and indoor air pollutants.

It is unnecessary to remove or avoid pets for preventing allergic disease.

*Partially hydrolysed formula is not suitable for baby who is diagnosed with cow’s milk protein allergy

If you want to get more information on allergies, please log-on to the Asthma & Allergy Association [http://aaa.org.sg/aboutus.htm]
References:

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