

Why allergies are more than irritating

A toolkit to help employees understand the serious health risks of allergies



Educate employees on the impact of allergies

Allergies may not seem like a serious health concern. And, for some people, they aren't. But for millions of people around the world, allergies are deadly serious. There are many different kinds of allergies, and none of them are curable. At best, they are manageable. At worst, they are debilitating and deadly.

Here are just some impacts of allergies on work productivity and healthcare costs:¹

- In 2010, Americans with nasal swelling spent about \$17.5 billion on health costs. They have also lost more than 6 million work and school days and made 16 million visits to their doctor.¹
- People visit the emergency room about 200,000 times each year because of food allergies. Almost 10,000 people stay in the hospital each year because of food allergies.²
- Food allergies cost about \$25 billion each year.³
- In 2010, nasal allergies (also known as allergic rhinitis) was diagnosed during 11.1 million doctor visits worldwide.⁴

According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, occupational or work-related asthma can result in long-term lung damage, loss of productivity and disability.⁵ People who suffer from allergies are more likely to develop occupational asthma. And people can become sicker at work because they can't avoid exposure to common triggers.

It is challenging to provide materials that cover the full spectrum of allergies. MetLife has created this employee education campaign "Why allergies are more than irritating" which focuses on respiratory (inhaled) and food allergies.

1. Food Allergy Research & Education, "Food Allergy Facts & Statistics," February 2016
2. Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, "Allergy Facts and Figures," September 2017
3. JAMA Pediatrics, "The economic impact of childhood food allergy in the United States," November 2013
4. World Allergy Organization, "Food Allergy—A Rising Global Health Problem," April, 2013
5. Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, "Healthy Settings for People with Asthma and Allergies," December 2014

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What's in the toolkit?

- Campaign objectives
- Marketing materials

Campaign objectives:

- Educate employees on the serious health risks associated with allergies
- Provide recommendations for how they can manage allergies to minimize debilitating or life-threatening reactions
- Raise awareness of the dangers of food allergies, so they can be prepared to make accommodations to keep an employees safe

Marketing materials:

1. Campaign emails

- **Week 1:** Should you be alarmed about allergies?
- **Week 2:** When you take a bite and it bites you back
- **Week 3:** A little sneezing or respiratory distress

2. Short articles

- I have a food allergy—work with it!
- Tips for managing food allergies at work
- Is it a cold, nasal allergy, or allergic asthma?
- Why doesn't my body just get used to allergens?

3. Flyers

- Basic facts about food allergies
- Is your common cold actually a chronic allergy?
- Diagnose, avoid, treat: how to manage allergies