



# Student Health Center

## UNC Wilmington

### INSTRUCTION SHEET: MILD ALLERGIC REACTION

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed an allergic reaction.

Something you have come into contact with has caused your body to react. Often, it is difficult to determine with certainty what caused the allergic reaction. Common causes are: new medicines (prescription or over-the-counter), foods, new cosmetics, detergents, shampoos, etc.

Treatment of the allergic reaction is fairly standard, whatever the cause. Determining the cause (and thus preventing future reactions) can take some investigation.

Common symptoms of a mild allergic reaction include: rash, red skin, intense itching, feeling restless or nervous. Signs of a severe allergic reaction, such as shock (low blood pressure) or breathing difficulty, are not present.

#### MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR ALLERGIC REACTION:

- 1- Rest at home. Take plenty of fluids.
- 2- Continue diphenhydramine (Benadryl), 25 mg, 1 or 2 every 4 to 6 hours for itching and rash.  
This medicine is available over-the-counter. Titrate the diphenhydramine to control your symptoms: Take 25 or 50 mg, up to 4 times a day, depending on how much itching you experience. The main side effect of Benadryl is drowsiness, so do not drive, operate machinery, climb a ladder, etc., while taking the medicine. Stop taking the diphenhydramine when your itching and rash are gone.
- 3- Write down everything you ate, contacted, were exposed to, etc., in the 12 to 24 hours prior to the first onset of symptoms. Keep the list with your medical records. If similar symptoms occur in the future, make another list. By comparing the lists, you may identify the cause of the allergic reaction. For example, if you took the same medication, or ate peanut butter both times, you likely have identified the offending substance.
- 4- If your symptoms continue, make a prompt appointment with your personal/referral doctor or return to Student Health. Continuing symptoms require further treatment and investigation of the cause. Testing for specific allergies may be necessary.
- 5- Should you develop any symptoms of *serious* allergic reaction (chances are small), proceed immediately to the closest emergency department. Specifically, seek attention if you develop difficulty breathing (wheezing, noise on breathing in) or become shocky (pale, sweating, fainting, lightheaded, confused, etc.).