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Now

Now celeb health

Food intolerance

Allergy ALERT!

What is it? Food allergies are often hereditary and affect about eight per cent of children and two per cent of adults. Nuts, for example, especially peanuts, can cause the body to have an abnormal reaction as it perceives the food to be a threat. Symptoms appear between two minutes and two hours after the allergic person has come into contact with the food. In severe cases, a sufferer will go into a state of shock called anaphylaxis, which if not treated in time can be fatal.

Celebrity sufferer: Mica Paris.

Her story: A romantic meal two years ago ended with Mica fighting for her life after eating pâté she'd been assured didn't contain nuts. Within minutes, the singer had a terrifying reaction. 'My face started to swell and I had trouble breathing,' she recalls. 'By the time the ambulance arrived, my face had changed so much I didn't look like me any more. My breathing was getting worse. I was terrified I was going to die.' She was put on an adrenaline drip and given oxygen, which fortunately saved her life.



Mica Paris is allergic to nuts.

Survival tips

- Strictly avoid the food you have an allergy to and check for cross-contamination possibilities: even a trace amount can be enough to trigger a reaction.

- Wear an identification bracelet that describes your allergy.
- Carry and know how to use injectable antidiotes epinephrine and antihistamine; Mica never leaves the house without them.

Allergy ALERT!

Dust

What is it? The thought of dust mites breeding in bedding, carpets and clothing is horrible enough, but even more so if you're allergic to the little critters. It's more of a problem in the summer when the mites thrive; they die off in the winter. But you can be allergic to other kinds of dust, too.

Celebrity sufferer: Lynda Bellingham.

Her story: There's not much that can get to Lynda Bellingham as tough criminal boss Irene Radford in *The Bill*, but in real life it's a different story. The actress has an allergy to dust that affects her leisure time. 'I love horses, but I can't really ride them now,' she says. 'The dust that surrounds them makes my eyes swell.'



Lynda Bellingham had to stop riding

Survival tips

- Double glazing and central heating make houses an ideal habitat for dust mites. Open windows for a blast of fresh air.
- Wash clothes and laundry at 55°C or above to kill dust mites.
- Dry clothes outside to keep humidity levels in your house low and close kitchen doors when cooking.
- Open windows while vacuuming and fit mite-proof covers to mattresses and pillows.
- For more information, visit www.allergyuk.org.

Allergy alert

One in four of us will suffer from an allergy in our lifetime, experiencing the misery of a reaction to triggers like dust mites and animals. Check out our guide to the most common allergies and how to deal with them

Niamh Cusack relies on acupuncture to control eczema



Eczema

Allergy ALERT!

What is it? Five million people in the UK suffer from this condition, which makes skin feel itchy, hot and painful.

Scratching can lead to bleeding, infection and yet more sensitivity. There are different kinds of eczema, but they share common triggers. These include dust mite droppings, grass, detergents, soap, latex, pets and perfume.

Celebrity sufferer: Niamh Cusack.

Her story: Niamh, best known for her role in *Heartbeat*, understands the misery the condition can cause. What's more, the visible nature of eczema can often lead to depression and a lack of self-confidence. As an actress, it was especially

important for Niamh to get on top of the problem. 'I still suffer with a little eczema on my face, but having acupuncture treatment three times a week keeps it under control,' she says.

Survival tips

- Steer clear of known triggers, including soap, bubble bath and harsh detergents.
- Wash new clothes before wearing them. Avoid wool, tight clothing and elastic; choose cotton clothes.
- Avoid contact with pets.
- Try not to scratch skin, as doing so may lead to infection; pat or gently slap instead.
- Steroid creams can be helpful. In severe cases, antibiotics may be prescribed.
- Visit www.allergymatters.com to find items to help you deal with eczema.