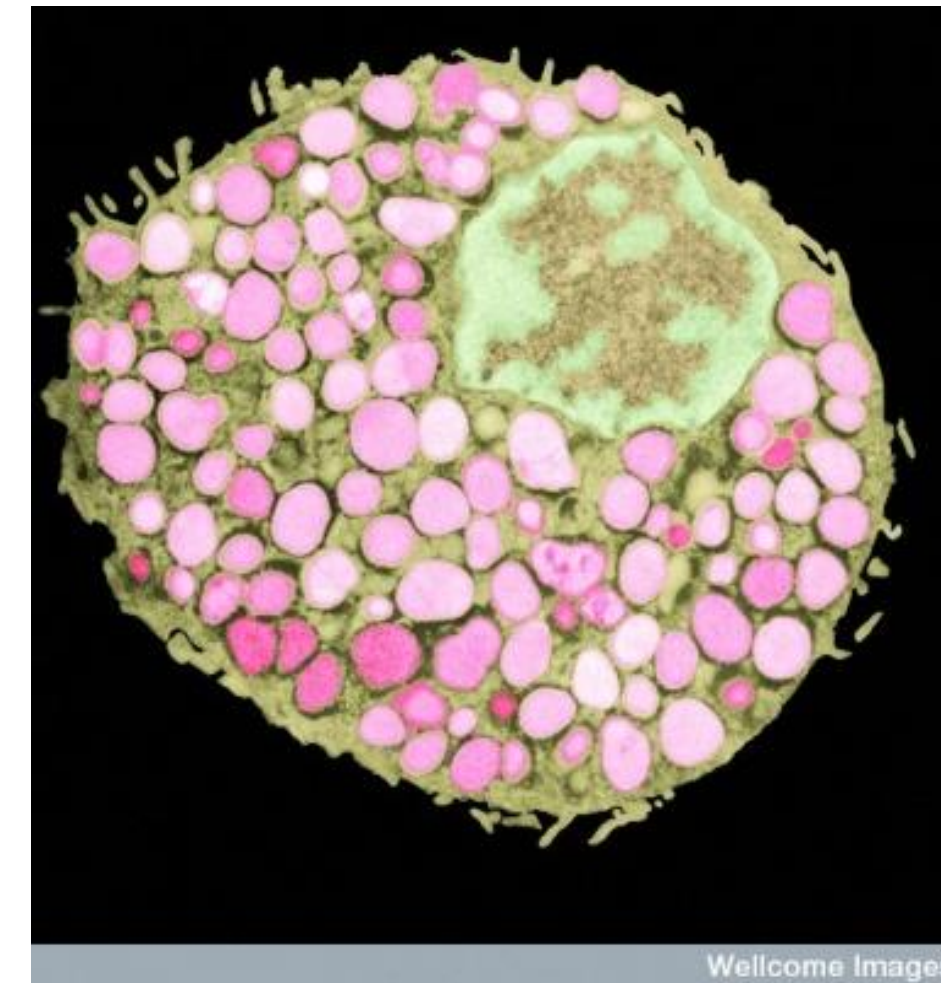


One in four people will suffer an allergy at some point in their life.

What is an allergy?

An allergy is where your immune system launches an attack against a substance in your environment that isn't normally harmful.

Most allergies are caused by a type of immune cell called a **mast cell**, which produces antibodies called IgE when they think they have come across a threat to the body.



A mast cell with histamine granules in pink

In allergies, these mast cells make a mistake and produce lots of IgE antibodies in response to a substance that is actually harmless. The IgE antibodies then make the mast cells spit out lots of other chemicals (such as histamine) that cause sneezing and inflammation.

This is how an allergic reaction is produced.

What are common things to be allergic to?

Substances that cause allergies are called **allergens**. Some common allergens are:



Pollen



Certain foods such as nuts



Mold



Animals



Dust mites

Different types of allergies can cause different symptoms

Some allergies to substances that are found in the air, such as pollen, cause a runny nose, itchy eyes and difficulty breathing.



Some allergens, such as some foods, can cause a rash, swelling to face and in severe cases, vomiting and diarrhoea.

You can also be allergic to substances that come into contact with your skin. This can cause a type of rash called contact dermatitis.