

# Allergies in Germany – Facts & Figures



## What is allergy?

An allergy is a misdirected immune response to substances that are actually harmless. The consequences: chronic or recurring inflammation of the respiratory tract, skin, or intestines, sometimes leading to severe anaphylactic reactions.

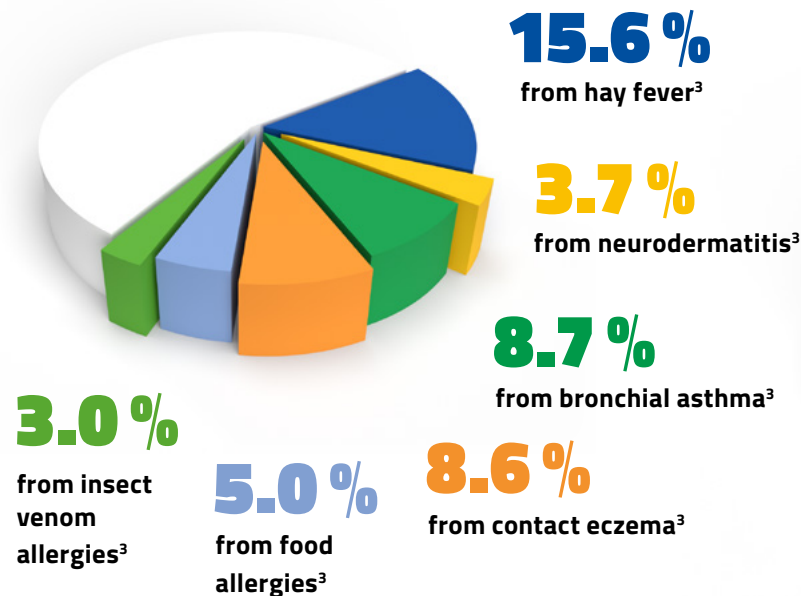
## The most common allergies

The most common allergies in Germany are allergic rhinitis and conjunctivitis (hay fever as allergic rhinitis caused by pollen is the most common), allergic bronchial asthma (only sometimes of an allergic genesis), neurodermatitis, contact allergies and food allergies. Urticaria is also often listed as an allergic disease, but is usually not allergic in nature.

## How many adults suffer from allergies?

30.9 percent of adults in Germany, i.e. almost one third, report having had an allergy<sup>1</sup> in the past twelve months. Women are affected more often (34.7 percent) than men (27 percent).<sup>2</sup>

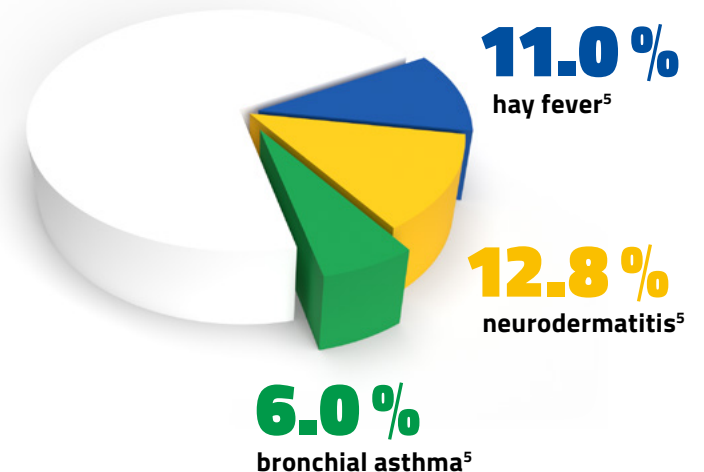
Of the adults in Germany, suffer:



About 3.3 million people in Germany were living with asthma treated with medication in 2021. This corresponds to 4.0 percent of the population, or 4.6 percent of the female population and 3.3 percent of the male population.<sup>4</sup>

## How many children and adolescents suffer from allergies?

In 23.7 percent of children and adolescents in Germany aged zero to 17 years, one of the three atopic diseases has been diagnosed at some time in their lives:

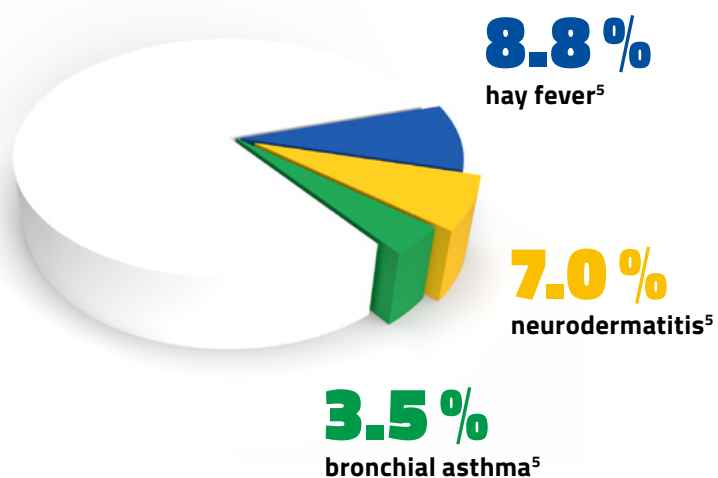


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## How many children and adolescents suffer from allergies?

**In 16.1 percent of children and adolescents, at least one of the three diseases was diagnosed in the past twelve months:**



Currently, 2.1 million adolescents in Germany suffer from at least one of the three diseases.<sup>5</sup>

## Risks and costs

More than one third (37.1 percent) of 3- to 17-year-olds in Germany show sensitisation to the SX1<sup>6</sup> allergen mixture. Among boys aged 14 to 17 years, more than half (55.7 percent) have an allergic disposition.

Allergic sensitisation itself is not regarded as a disease. However, it is the prerequisite for developing allergic symptoms. Sensitisation to inhalant allergens in particular is associated with the development of hay fever and allergic asthma.<sup>5</sup>

If hay fever is not treated or is treated incorrectly, there is a risk of a so-called stage change – the affected person also develops allergic bronchial asthma. If hay fever occurs before the age of seven, the risk of developing asthma later in life triples.<sup>7</sup>

The annual cost of hay fever with chronic asthma is up to six times higher than the cost of hay fever alone.<sup>8</sup>

## Economic impact

The high number of cases contrasts with a decreasing number of allergy practices. One of the reasons for this is the insufficient remuneration of allergological diagnostics and treatment. Although allergies are on the rise, only ten percent of all allergy sufferers are treated correctly.<sup>3</sup>

On average, 84 billion euros could be saved annually in Europe if allergies were treated properly.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> without allergic bronchial asthma

<sup>2</sup> Heidemann, C. et al. Health situation of adults in Germany – Results for selected indicators from GEDA 2019/2020-EHIS. Journal of Health Monitoring 2021; 6(3): 3–27

<sup>3</sup> Klimek, L. et al. White Paper on Allergy in Germany. 4th revised and extended edition 2019, Springer Medizin Verlag GmbH

<sup>4</sup> Gesundheitsatlas des Wissenschaftlichen Instituts der AOK (WIdO) 2021; [www.gesundheitsatlas-deutschland.de/erkrankung/asthma?activeValueType=prevalence&activeLayerType=state](http://www.gesundheitsatlas-deutschland.de/erkrankung/asthma?activeValueType=prevalence&activeLayerType=state)

<sup>5</sup> Thamm, R. et al. Allergic diseases in children and adolescents in Germany – Results of the cross-sectional KiGGS Wave 2 study and trends. Journal of Health Monitoring 2018; 3(3): 3–18

<sup>6</sup> SX1 is a mix of common inhalant allergens from timothy, rye, birch, mugwort, cat and dog dander, house dust mite and the mould Cladosporium herbarum.

<sup>7</sup> Schmitz, R. et al. Development of allergic diseases in children and adolescents – Results of the KiGGS cohort. Allergo Journal International 2016; 25: 188

<sup>8</sup> Schramm, B. et al. Cost of illness of atopic asthma and seasonal allergic rhinitis in Germany: 1-yr retrospective study. European Respiratory Journal 2003; 21(1): 116–22

<sup>9</sup> Zuberbier, T. et al. Economic burden of inadequate management of allergic diseases in the European Union: a GA<sup>2</sup>LEN review. Allergy 2014; 69(10): 1275–9