



# NatCapLyme

The National Capital Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Association

## We Help You Fight The Bite



### WHAT IS AN ALPHA-GAL ALLERGY?

Alpha-Gal – commonly known as the “red meat allergy” – causes an allergic reaction from the ingestion of a complex sugar, called alpha-gal, found in red meats – such as beef, pork, lamb, venison, and bison. Alpha-gal is a carbohydrate or sugar (known as galactose–alpha-1,3-galactose) that is not present in humans but is found in non-primate mammals such as cows, sheep, pigs, and dogs.

Once bitten by a tick carrying alpha-gal, typically a lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*), the human body begins to form antibodies anywhere from a couple of weeks to a month or more against the unwelcome substance.

### WHAT ARE THE FREQUENTLY REPORTED SYMPTOMS?

Listed below are the most common symptoms, which may vary from patient-to-patient.

- Hives or skin rash
- Itchy palms and soles
- Stuffy/runny nose
- Sneezing
- Headaches
- Asthma
- Nausea, stomach cramps, indigestion, vomiting, and diarrhea
- Anaphylaxis (life threatening response)



## HOW IS THE ALPHA-GAL ALLERGY DIAGNOSED?

An accurate diagnosis of an alpha-gal reaction should include a patient's history of tick bites and a positive blood test. However, the test can be perplexing given that some patients may test positive for alpha-gal yet never experience a reaction to the ingestion of meat.

## HOW IS ALPHA-GAL TREATED?

Treatment can vary from a dose of an antihistamine such as Benadryl; an injection of an EpiPen (epinephrine); or to a trip to the emergency room - based on the severity of the reaction and the progression of symptoms. If diagnosed with alpha-gal, avoid red meats and be mindful of cross contamination at restaurants or meat flavorings added to other foods.

## IS THE ALPHA-GAL ALLERGY CURABLE?

One of the leading medical experts involved in the discovery of this allergy speculates that the condition may resolve if the immune system is not further compromised by subsequent tick bites. Practice effective prevention by using repellants, avoiding tick-infested areas, and checking your body for ticks.

### For more information contact:

**National Capital Lyme Disease Association**  
P.O. Box 8211  
McLean, VA 22106-8211  
(703) 821-8833  
[natcaplyme@natcaplyme.org](mailto:natcaplyme@natcaplyme.org)



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