**Mast cells** are a type of **white blood cell** that lives in the body’s tissues. They are responsible for starting an **allergic reaction**.

**How?**

1. Mast cells have molecules on their surface called **IgE immunoglobulin**.

2. Mast cells also store **granules** – these contain **histamine**.

3. When parts of an **allergen**, such as nuts or pollen, binds to IgE, the mast cell releases histamine from the granules.

4. Histamine causes the symptoms of an **allergic reaction**, characterised by redness, sneezing, itching, runny eyes and swelling. We take **anti-histamines** to stop this reaction.