



Allergy Season

Got The Sniffles?



With allergy season upon us, some of you may be experiencing the foggy symptoms of hay fever. Let's learn more about what causes this disease, what the most common allergens are and how to manage those nasty symptoms. After all, you've got a whole summer out there to enjoy!

What Causes Allergies?

You have an allergy when your body overreacts to things that don't cause problems for most people. These things are called allergens. If you have allergies, when you are exposed to an allergen, your body releases chemicals. One type of chemical that your body releases is called histamine. Histamine is your body's defense against the allergen. The release of histamine causes your symptoms.

What Are Common Allergens?

Pollen from trees, grass and weeds. Allergies that occur in the spring (late April and May) are often due to tree pollen. Allergies that occur in the summer (late May to mid- July) are often due to grass and weed pollen. Allergies that occur in the fall (late August to the first frost) are often due to ragweed. If you are allergic to pollen, you will

notice your symptoms are worse on hot, dry days when wind carries the pollen. On rainy days, pollen often is washed to the ground, which means you are less likely to breathe it.

Mold. Mold is common where water tends to collect, such as shower curtains, window moldings and damp basements. It can also be found in rotting logs, hay, mulches, commercial peat moss, compost piles and leaf litter. This allergy is usually worse during humid and rainy weather.

Animal dander. Proteins found in the skin, saliva, and urine of furry pets such as cats and dogs are allergens. You can be exposed to dander when handling an animal or from house dust that contains dander.

Dust. Many allergens, including dust mites, are in dust. Dust mites are tiny living creatures found in bedding, mattresses, carpeting and upholstered furniture. They live on dead skin cells and other things found in house dust.

Treatment

Several medicines can be used to treat allergies. Your doctor will help you determine what medicine is best for you depending on your symptoms, age and overall health. These medicines are more useful if you use them before you're exposed to allergens.

Antihistamines help reduce the sneezing, runny nose and itchiness of allergies. They're more useful if you use them before you're exposed to allergens. Some antihistamines come in pill form (some brand names: Zyrtec, Claritin) and some are nasal sprays (brand names: Astelin and Patanase). Some antihistamines can cause drowsiness and dry mouth. Others are less likely to cause these side effects, but some of these require a prescription. Ask your doctor which kind is best for you.

Decongestants, such as pseudoephedrine and phenylephrine, help temporarily relieve the stuffy nose of allergies. Decongestants are found in many medicines and come as pills, nose sprays and nose drops (some brand names: Sudafed, Afrin, Sinex). They are best used only for a short time.

Nose sprays and drops shouldn't be used for more than 3 days because you can become dependent on them. This causes you to feel even more stopped-up when you try to quit using them. You can buy decongestants without a doctor's prescription. However, decongestants can raise your blood pressure, so it's a good idea to talk to your family doctor before using them, especially if you have high blood pressure.

Cromolyn sodium is a nasal spray (one brand name: NasalCrom) that helps prevent the body's reaction to allergens. Cromolyn sodium is more helpful if you use it before you're exposed to allergens. This medicine may take 2 to 4 weeks to start working. It is available without a prescription.

Nasal steroid sprays reduce the reaction of the nasal tissues to inhaled allergens. This helps relieve the swelling in your nose so that you feel less stopped-up. They are the most effective at treating patients who have chronic symptoms. Nasal steroid sprays are available with a prescription from your doctor. You won't notice their benefits for up to 2 weeks after starting them.

Eye drops. If your other medicines are not helping enough with your itchy, watery eyes,

your doctor may prescribe eye drops for you.

Allergy shots or sublingual tablets (also called immunotherapy) are an option for people who try other treatments but still have allergy symptoms. These shots or dissolvable tablets contain a very small amount of the allergen you are allergic to. They're given on a regular schedule so that your body gets used to the allergens and no longer overreacts to them. This helps decrease your body's sensitivity to the allergen. Over time, your allergy symptoms will become less severe. Allergy shots or sublingual tablets are only used when the allergens you're sensitive to can be identified and when you can't avoid them. It takes a few months to years to finish treatment, and you may need to have treatments throughout your life.

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Sun Protection

What's So Bad About Getting Too Much Sun?

The sun's rays, which are called ultraviolet A and ultraviolet B rays (UVA and UVB rays) damage your skin. This leads to early wrinkles, skin cancer and other skin problems.

Being in the sun too often for too long can lead to skin cancer, even if you don't burn. A tan is the body's attempt to protect itself from the sun's harmful rays.



What About Tanning Booths?

Unfortunately, tanning booths are no safer than overexposure to the sun. Tanning booths use ultraviolet rays. Makers of the booths may claim that they use "harmless" UVA rays. But both UVA and UVB rays cause skin damage. While UVA rays take longer than UVB rays to damage the skin, they go deeper into the skin than UVB rays.

Who's At Risk?

A number of factors may put you at higher risk of having skin cancer, including the following:

- Having light-colored eyes
- Sunburning easily
- Having many moles, freckles or birthmarks
- Having fair skin and/or red or blonde hair
- Working or playing outside
- Being in the sun a lot as a child
- Having had a serious sunburn

- Having had skin cancer or having family members who have had skin cancer
- Tanning in the sun or with a sunlamp

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Hydration



Why is it so important?

Your body depends on water to survive. Every cell, tissue, and organ in your body needs water to work correctly. For example, your body uses water to maintain its temperature, remove waste, and lubricate joints. Water is needed for good health.

How Does Your Body Lose Water?

Water makes up more than half of your body weight. You lose water each day when you go to the bathroom, sweat, and even when you breathe. You lose water even faster when the weather is really hot, when you are physically active, or if you have a fever. Vomiting and diarrhea can also lead to rapid water loss. If you don't replace the water you lose, you can become dehydrated.

What Are The Symptoms of Dehydration?

Symptoms of dehydration include the following:

- Little or no urine, or urine that is darker than usual
- Dry mouth
- Sleepiness or fatigue
- Extreme thirst
- Headache
- Confusion
- Dizziness or lightheaded feeling
- No tears when crying

Don't wait until you notice symptoms of dehydration to take action. Actively prevent dehydration by drinking plenty of water.

Trial Participants Needed

Cholesterol Trial

We are still looking for people who would like to participate in our **cholesterol** trial. If you or anyone you know has a history of high cholesterol, is being treated with a statin medication and is interested in volunteering for this trial, please call our office at 717-267-3606 or write to Kathy at kathy@scotlandfamilymedicine.com. All visits are **free** of charge and you will receive **compensation** for your time.



Alzheimer's Trial

Please contact our office at 717-267-3606 or write to Kathy at kathy@scotlandfamilymedicine.com if you, a friend or family member would be interested in being considered for a **new medication** that is being investigated to help with behavior of patients with **Alzheimer's** disease.

Coming Up...

Keep your eyes peeled next month for an interesting Healthy Bytes where we talk about dealing with anxiety, learning what macronutrients are in our food and other natural approaches to living a healthier life!

Any Suggestions?

We'd love to hear any suggestions you might have for us. If there's a specific topic you'd like us to cover, a preference on how often you'd like to receive these newsletters or any other thoughts you have on how we're doing, please contact us **here** or just give us a call at 717-267-3606. Thanks!



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