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Allergy Tips

Each season brings its own, unique blend of allergens into the air. The fall brings three dominant allergens: Ragweed, Dust Mites and Molds.

The incidence of allergies is definitely on the rise, there are several theories that explain this fact. The “Hygiene Theory” claims that our generation is “too clean” and since our immune system is not constantly bombarded with a “healthy dose of germs”, our immune mechanism shifts to a more allergic mode.

Being that allergies are definitely on the minds of many parents today, I wanted to share some useful information with you from a publication of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

When to Suspect an Allergy

- Repeated or chronic cold-like symptoms that last more than a week or two, or develop at about the same time every year. These could include a runny nose, nasal stuffiness, sneezing, throat clearing, and itchy, watery eyes.
- Recurrent coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, difficulty breathing, and other respiratory symptoms may be a sign of asthma. Coughing may be an isolated symptom; symptoms that increase at night or with exercise are suspicious for asthma.
- Recurrent red, itchy, dry, sometime scaly rashes in the creases of the elbows and/or knees, or on the back of the neck, buttocks, wrists, or ankles.
- Symptoms that occur repeatedly after eating a particular food that may include hives, swelling, gagging, coughing or wheezing, vomiting or significant abdominal pain.
- Itching or tingling sensations in the mouth, throat and/or ears during certain times of year or after eating certain foods.

Common Allergies on the Home Front

- Dust mites (dust mites are microscopic and are found in bedding, upholstered furniture and carpet as well as other places)
- Furred animal allergens (dogs, cats, guinea pigs, gerbils, rabbits, etc.)
- Pest allergens (cockroaches, mice, rats)
- Pollen (trees, grasses, weeds)
- Molds and fungi (including molds too small to be seen with the naked eye)
- Foods (cow's milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, fish and shellfish)



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How to Manage Allergic Nasal Symptoms

- Nasal allergy symptoms can be caused by a variety of environmental allergens including indoor allergens such as dust mites, pets, and pests as well as outdoor allergens such as pollens. Molds, which can be found indoors and outdoors, can also trigger nasal allergy symptoms.
- Allergy testing should be performed to determine what, if any, of these environmental allergens your child is allergic to. An important step in managing allergy symptoms is avoidance of the allergens that trigger the symptoms.
- If your child is allergic to pets, the addition of pets to your family would not be recommended. If your child has allergy symptoms and is allergic to a pet that lives with your family, the only way to have a significant impact on your child's exposure to pet allergens is to find the pet a new home.
- If your child is allergic to pests, professional extermination, sealing holes and cracks that serve as entry points for pests, storing foods in plastic containers with lids and meticulous clean up of food remains can help to eliminate the pests and reduce allergen levels.
- Dust mites congregate where moisture is retained and food for them (human skin scales) is plentiful. They are especially numerous in bedding, upholstered furniture, and rugs. Padded furnishings such as mattresses, box springs, and pillows should be encased in allergen-proof, zip-up covers, which are available through catalogs and specialized retailers. Wash linens weekly and other bedding, such as blankets, every 1 to 2 weeks in hot water. (The minimum temperature to kill mites is 130 degrees. If you set your water heater higher than 120 degrees, the recommended temperature to avoid accidental scald burns, take care if young children are present in the home.)
- Dehumidify - If your child is allergic to outdoor allergens, it can be helpful to use air conditioners when possible. Showering or bathing at the end of the day to remove allergens from body surfaces and hair can also be helpful. For patients with grass pollen allergy, remaining indoors when grass is mowed and avoiding playing in fields of tall grass may be helpful. Children with allergies to molds should avoid playing in piles of dead leaves in the fall.

Medications to Control Symptoms

Your child's allergy treatment should start with your pediatrician, who may refer you to a pediatric allergy specialist for additional evaluations and treatments.

- **Antihistamines** – Ones taken by mouth can help with itchy watery eyes, runny nose and sneezing, as well as itchy skin and hives. Some types may cause drowsiness.
- **Nasal Corticosteroids** - Highly effective for allergy symptom control and are widely used to stop chronic symptoms. Safe to use in children over long periods of time. Must be used daily.



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- **Allergy Immunotherapy** - Immunotherapy, or allergy shots, may be recommended to reduce your child's allergy symptoms. Allergy shots are only prescribed in patients with confirmed allergy. If allergen avoidance and medications are not successful, allergy shots for treatment of respiratory allergies to pollen, dust mites, cat and dog dander, and outdoor molds can help decrease the need for daily medication.
- **Vitamin C** – studies have shown that Vitamin C aids in preventing and treating allergy symptoms.
- **Peppermint Tea** – has natural anti-bacterial and anti-histaminic properties.
- **Wasabi** - Anyone who has taken too big a dollop of wasabi (or plain old horseradish) knows that it makes sinuses and tear ducts spring into action. That's because allyl isothiocyanate, a constituent in wasabi, promotes mucus flow.

Wishing you a healthy fall season!

Sincerely,

David Elazar Simai, M.D.