



FOCUS FOR MAY: ALLERGY AWARENESS

Many of us know the misery of allergies all too well: the sneezing, watery itchy eyes, a sneeze attack, runny nose and scratchy throat. Our sleep suffers, and reduced quantity and quality of air can affect our moods, energy levels, concentration, daily performance and decision making. Allergies may be seasonal, year-round, or occupational. Allergens are allergic reactions: may be caused by the air we inhale: pollen, grasses, weeds, household dust, dog dander, mold spores and dust mites. Some are ingested by mouth: peanuts, shrimp, other nuts and others absorbed through the skin: poison ivy, sumac, oak and latex. Injected medications can cause allergic reactions also: penicillin or venom from insect stings and bites.

Allergies are diseases of the immune system that cause an overreaction to substances called allergens. The best way to prevent allergy symptoms is to avoid your allergens as much as you can. Different things that cause the symptoms are called triggers.

INDOORS: Pets: Dogs, cats and other animals shed tiny flakes of skin called dander. Dander may be a trigger. Some people may be allergic to animal urine or saliva. Select pets with short hair or less shedding or call your veterinarian for suggestions and advice. Rugs and carpets: Floor coverings often have dust mites. Make sure your house is clean, and free of chemical and dust collectors. Inspect beds, pillows, mattresses and box springs and make sure they are incased in hypo-allergenic coverings. People may be allergic to feathers in their comforters. Curtains and blinds collect dust, weekly cleaning is a good habit. Check the bathrooms, basements and kitchens for molds which can also grow in damp places outside. Select from the many different products on the market especially the eco-friendly ones.

Antihistamines, decongestants, eye drops, corticosteroids creams or ointments allergy sprays and epinephrine may be prescribed by your physician to assist you in managing your allergies. You do not have to suffer through another allergy season.

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America: www.aafa.org/display