

From the Nurses' Desk
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SURVIVING SPRING ALLERGIES

Tips from the Health Department

After this long winter, we will welcome spring with great joy. But for the millions of us who suffer from seasonal allergies, it can be a time of misery. Allergens are substances that initiate an allergic response to pollen and molds. Many trees, weeds and bushes have pollens that are easily carried by the winds. These antigens combine with an antibody called immunoglobulin E (IgE). This allergic antibody is normally in low levels in the body, but is found in larger quantities in people with allergies. These allergies can lead to more severe chronic problems such as asthma and sinusitis.

Here are some tips to help lessen your exposure to seasonal allergens:

- Use an air conditioner and dehumidifier to keep air cool and dry.
- Use large waxy flowers like lilies and tulips to decorate your home instead of fresh flowers. Their pollen is too heavy and sticky to enter the air and cause an allergic reaction.
- Stay inside between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m. when pollen counts are highest and on windy days.
- Keep the windows closed in your home and your car.
- Avoid mowing and raking lawns as much as you can.
- After spending time outdoors, remove shoes outside to avoid pollen being brought in.
- Change your clothes as soon as possible to avoid contact with accumulated pollen.
- Shower after spending extended periods of time outdoors. This will remove built up pollen from skin and hair.
- Do not hang clothing or sheets outside to dry. They will collect pollen and mold from outside.
- Check the daily weather reports for pollen and mold counts. If you are under a physician's care, follow his or her orders regarding medications and sprays to help manage your care.