

ALLERGIES ... DO YOU HAVE THEM?

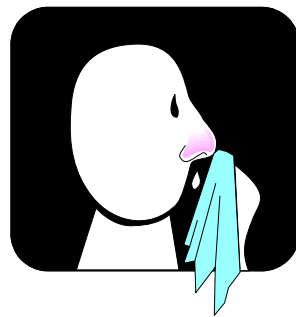
If you are one of the 60 million Americans who suffer from allergies, you know the reality of a life of sneezing, coughing, stuffed-up nose and itchy, watery eyes. Unfortunately, allergens (any substance that causes an allergic reaction in your body) are present year round in your home. Seasonal allergies - which affect at least 10% of Americans - can make matters worse when combined with allergens found in the home.

Outdoor allergens include pollens, mold and mildew, and pollutants. The most common allergens found in the home are dust and dust mites, mold and mildew, animal dander and saliva, and cockroaches.

Often symptoms of allergies can mimic those of a common cold. Keep a calendar of when your symptoms appear as well as the type, and severity, of symptoms you experience.

The following **SYMPTOMS** are typical (but not always) due to allergies:

- ✓ You do NOT have a fever or chills
- ✓ You have "cold" symptoms that are prolonged or last for many weeks
- ✓ You experience these cold symptoms when no one else in your house is sick
- ✓ You have symptoms that are repetitive or appear on a predictable basis (for example, symptoms that appear at the same time the dogwoods bloom each year)
- ✓ You feel wheezy or experience shortness of breath
- ✓ You have sinus headaches with pain generally located in the face
- ✓ You often sneeze 4 or 5 times in a row
- ✓ You have trouble sleeping at night and/or you are tired for no apparent reason
- ✓ You have dark circles or bags under your eyes



- ✓ You have a gelatin-like discharge from your eyes, or frequent sties, cysts or tiny white scales on the lower edge of the upper eyelid

If you suspect that you are experiencing allergy symptoms, you may want to see an allergist. An allergist can help determine your specific allergens through testing or more detailed questions, and then help you plan strategies for finding relief. Once you determine which allergens cause you trouble ... **STAY AWAY FROM THEM** as much as possible.

REDUCE your general exposure:

- ✓ Use a portable HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Arresting) air filter in your bedroom. HEPA filters can remove 99.7% of dust, mold, spores, pollen and pet dander from the air.
- ✓ Change your clothes and shower when you come in from outside. Pollen sticks to your hair and clothes and can aggravate your symptoms. Leave your shoes at the door.
- ✓ Don't use carpets or rugs, especially in the bedroom. Use plastic or metal blinds and wash them often - cloth curtains collect dust.
- ✓ Keep pets out of the bedroom ... and especially off the bed. In addition to dander, saliva and dust mites, pets carry pollen grains in from outside.
- ✓ Wash all your bed linens weekly, including your pillows in hot water (103° Fahrenheit) to kill dust mites. Use hypoallergenic fiberfill pillows and mattress pads.
- ✓ Consider using a HEPA or electrostatic filter in your furnace or air conditioner. For forced air systems, keep seasonal allergens out of rooms by covering the vents with a filter.
- ✓ Clean your home and car air conditioners at the beginning of each allergy season.
- ✓ Keep the windows closed and use an air conditioner (change the filter regularly).
- ✓ Use a dehumidifier in damp areas to control mold and mildew. Do not sleep in basement level areas.
- ✓ Watch the weather! Rain usually brings relief to pollen sufferers because it washes away the pollen particles. Mold sufferers do worse after a few rainy days because damp weather helps mold and mildew to grow.

For more information, contact:

THE ALLERGY AND ASTHMA FOUNDATION OF AMERICA
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MANALAPAN HEALTH DEPARTMENT