**Arresting Asthma**

If you or someone you know suffers from asthma, avoiding these triggers can help reduce breathing trouble and asthma attacks:

- **Irritants.** These triggers cause nonallergic asthma. Steer clear of secondhand smoke, wood smoke and chemicals in the air. Stay away from strong odors or sprays such as perfumes, cooking fumes (especially from frying), paints, varnishes and industrial cleaners. At work, watch exposure to fumes, gases and dust.

- **Upper respiratory illness.** Try to avoid or quickly relieve cold and flu symptoms, which are primary triggers for nonallergic asthma.

- **Medications.** Aspirin and similar pain relievers, such as ibuprofen, may trigger asthma attacks in adults. Beta-blockers, which are used to treat heart disease, high blood pressure or migraine headaches, may also have this effect.

- **Foods.** Milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, fish and shellfish may trigger attacks in some people.

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**About physical activity ...**

Strenuous physical activity can increase the likelihood of exercise-induced asthma. Yet athletes and nonathletes alike manage to live an active, fitness-filled life with this condition. Check with your health care provider about a fitness program you can safely follow.

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**Wondering if it’s asthma?**

Don’t delay in seeing your doctor or health care provider for a firm diagnosis.

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**Understanding Allergies**

**Did You Know?**

- In many foreclosed homes, when the family moves out, mold moves in. With closed doors and windows and no air conditioning, humidity levels can rise, promoting mold growth. **Mold** can cause significant health problems, especially in sensitive people. If you are considering purchasing a home, have the inspector check for signs of mold. Drywall, carpets, ceiling tiles, paneling or other mold-infected items may need to be replaced.

- **Smokers** are at increased risk for occupational asthma, which is triggered by workplace exposure to irritants such as fumes, gases and dust.

- **Emotional stress** may reduce your resistance to allergens.

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**When an Allergy Becomes an Emergency**

Anaphylaxis can be fatal. Call 9-1-1 right away for symptoms such as sudden drop in blood pressure; swelling of face, tongue or throat; difficulty breathing; wheezing or chest tightness.

An epinephrine shot can ease the reaction in the meantime. If you keep epinephrine on hand for injection, remember to check the expiration date regularly.

If you’ve been prescribed self-injectable epinephrine for insect stings or food allergies, carry it with you at all times.

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Allergy Basics

Tens of millions of people suffer from allergies because their immune systems are overly sensitive to pollen, dust mites, foods or other substances called allergens.

The good news is that you don’t have to suffer needlessly. A combination of awareness, prevention and treatment can help you enjoy life more fully.

How Allergies Can Make You Sick

Common conditions related to allergies:

Hay fever: Also known as allergic rhinitis, hay fever is an inflammation of the lining of the nose, triggered by pollen and other substances. Hay fever can be mistaken for a cold.

Asthma: This chronic respiratory disorder is characterized by difficult breathing due to a constricted and inflamed airway. Triggers can include pollen, mold, dander, dust mites and cockroach droppings.

Dermatitis: Also called eczema, this is a chronic but not dangerous skin disorder. Common symptoms include dry, itchy, rashlike redness and inflammation.

Hay Fever or Cold?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Hay Fever</th>
<th>Cold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nasal discharge</td>
<td>Thin, watery, clear discharge</td>
<td>Thick, yellow to green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itching</td>
<td>In ears, eyes, nose or throat</td>
<td>Rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneezing</td>
<td>Severe, prolonged spells</td>
<td>Only occasional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symptom duration</td>
<td>Continue, occur most of year</td>
<td>Last 7-10 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Take 5 for Prevention

Many allergens enter the body through inhaling or touching, so reducing your exposure is important.

- **Clean house.** Thoroughly clean air-conditioning vents and ducts to help reduce allergens. Bleach moldy surfaces and fix water leaks. If cleaning triggers your allergies, get some help with chores.

- **Note the pollen counts.** Check weather reports and stay indoors more when counts are high. Also, keep windows closed. Using a dehumidifier to reduce indoor humidity can help too.

- **Launder well.** Wash bedding weekly in water that is hotter than 130 F. Dry clothes in a dryer, rather than outside.

- **Practice pet control.** Keep pets off furniture and out of your bedroom.

- **Wash away.** Wash hands frequently to remove allergens such as pollen. Shower before bed to reduce transfer of allergens to bedding.

What About Food Allergies?

Food allergy is not common in adults or children, but it can be serious in some people. Symptoms may include itching in the mouth, vomiting, diarrhea or stomach pain, hives, eczema, or asthma.

Eight foods account for most food allergies: peanuts, tree nuts (e.g., walnuts, cashews), fish, shellfish, milk, eggs, wheat and soy. Peanuts in particular can cause a severe allergic reaction, called anaphylaxis. Strict avoidance is the only proven remedy for food allergy. Good news: Food manufacturers are required to list possible allergy-inducing ingredients, so read food packages carefully.

Seek a proper diagnosis if you suspect food allergy.

Prevention and Relief

**Antihistamines.** Non-sedating oral and nasal spray antihistamines can be used to treat hay fever. These are available over the counter and by prescription. Antihistamines are best taken before exposure to triggers. Safety note: Antihistamines can cause drowsiness.

**Decongestants.** Available in pills, liquid or nasal spray, decongestants help relieve stuffy nose. A combination antihistamine-decongestant may be more effective than either alone.

**Corticosteroids.** These are anti-inflammatory medications used to treat many allergic disorders, including hay fever, asthma and eczema. Pills and inhalers can treat respiratory disorders such as asthma; topical creams or ointments can relieve skin allergies.

**Mast cell stabilizers.** Nonsteroidal medications, such as cromolyn and nedocromil, prevent release of inflammatory chemicals for both hay fever and asthma.

**Allergy shots.** Also known as immunotherapy, allergy shots are intended to help the body develop immunity to the allergens involved in hay fever, asthma and insect stings. Immunity building can take months to years. Consider this option if you can’t avoid triggers or if medications don’t bring relief.

CALL 770.977.9300