

Allergy Guidelines

Environmental Avoidance

1. Cover pillows and mattress with allergy covers. There is a wide variety of costs and comfort. They should all work the same. Try shopping at Wal-Mart, Target, and Bed, Bath & Beyond.
2. Wash pillow cases and sheets at least once per week in very hot water.
3. Remove stuffed animals from bed. Place in dryer once per week.
4. Change air conditioner intake filter frequently, using one approved for allergy.
5. Use HEPA quality vacuum cleaner bags.
6. Consider an air filter for the most commonly used rooms in your house (i.e. bedroom). Either a HEPA air filter or an Ionic Filter will work well.
7. If you are allergic to pollen, avoid outdoor exposure during the peak in pollen season. The pollen levels are usually highest in the morning.
8. Use a filter mask while performing yard work.
9. If you are allergic to your pet, consider how to minimize your exposure.
10. Consider changing carpets for hard wood or tile flooring.
11. If you are allergic to molds, consider your air conditioning ducts. DO NOT undertake the extremely expensive and ineffective practice of cleaning and /or treating the ducts. This seldom makes any significant impact and may actually make matters worse. Go to www.epa.gov for more information about this. If your ducts are old and full of mold, consider replacing all of the ducts. It is actually about half the cost of treating and cleaning them.

Medications

1. Avoid over the counter antihistamines except for Claritin. These antihistamines have many side effects including sedation, confusion, trouble concentrating, urinary retention, decreased sweating, blurry vision and more. Most cold medicines and over the counter medications have these older antihistamines.
2. Over the counter Claritin (loratadine) and prescription antihistamines are very effective and do not have the unwanted side effects. Zyrtec (cetirizine) does cause some sedation. Do not use these medications as a sleep aid – persistent daytime sleepiness and decreased mental function will result.
3. Use **nasal saline - Directions:** mix 1-3 teaspoon of sea salt, 1 teaspoon of baking soda and 4 cups (1 quart) of warm distilled water. Place in spray bottle and use for nasal irrigation. Discard unused amount after 1 week. Use spray at least 2 times per day. You can do irrigations over a sink or in the shower. It is best to hang your head below your shoulders to diminish risk of choking. If you feel pressure in your ears, panting will reduce tension in the soft palate allowing saline to pass easily from the nose to the mouth. Log rolls on bed and head between legs maneuvers following irrigations will cut down on unwanted post irrigation nasal drainage.
4. Use prescription nasal sprays every day for best effectiveness. This is best achieved after saline irrigations and maneuvers.
5. Avoid using Afrin (oxymetazoline) or Little Noses (neosynephrine) for more than 4 days in a row.
6. Avoid antihistamines + “D”. These medications contain pseudoephedrine which may cause nervousness, anxiety, heart palpitations, increased blood pressure and more. Sudafed (pseudoephedrine) is a good medication when symptoms are severe but it should be used for a short time only.

Allergy Testing

Allergy testing (RAST or skin testing) should be performed for all people with allergy symptoms for the following reasons:

1. Confirms if allergy is truly a problem. This may avoid medication trials which may or may not be effective.
2. Identifies allergic triggers. This makes it possible to avoid them.
3. Identifies allergens required for immunotherapy if desired.