

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Are You a Nosey Person? Understanding Allergies

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I was sitting on my back porch enjoying my view in this incredible area that I am fortunate to inhabit, and I noticed it was snowing. Although not out of the realm of possibilities that it snows in the middle of June in the Ruby Valley, but the so-called snow I was witnessing was Cottonwood blooms. I thought to myself, I really feel lucky that I do not have allergies.

So what really are allergies? When someone says, "I have allergies," what they are usually talking about are seasonal allergies. Certain times of the year they develop those dreaded symptoms and the misery begins. So let's get an understanding of allergies.

Allergies are a broad term meaning that when the body is exposed to something, food, medication, pollen, dust, etc.; it begins a response to fight that allergen (it produces histamines). This article will focus on allergies related to the season (seasonal allergies), those symptoms caused by pollen from trees, grasses and weeds. Perennial rhinitis (year round) is usually caused by indoor allergens like dust mites, mold, spores or animal dander.

In the medical world, it is called allergic rhinitis or allergic rhinosinusitis which simply means the allergies primarily affect the nose. Allergic rhinitis is characterized by sneezing, running nose, nasal obstruction, red and itching eyes, itching nose, ears, and upper part of the mouth (palate). Other symptoms can include postnasal drip, cough, irritability and fatigue.

Allergic rhinitis affects 10-30 percent of children and adults in the US and accounts for 2.5 percent of provider office visits, 2 million lost school days, 6 million lost work days and 28 million restricted work days per year. Medical spending on allergic rhinitis has almost doubled from 2000 to 2006 (6.1 billion dollars to 11.2 billion during that timeframe).

Allergic rhinitis can be categorized by a pattern of either intermittent or persistent symptoms and by severity (mild or mild-moderate). Intermittent symptoms are present less than 4 days per week or for less than 4 weeks while persistent symptoms are present more than 4 days per week and for more than 4 weeks. With mild-moderate symptoms, one or more of the following are present; disturbance of sleep, school or work performance impairment, impairment of daily activities, leisure and/or sport activities. With mild symptoms, none of the above impairments are present.

So your provider has told you that you have seasonal allergies. Now what? Well allergic rhinitis is solely a clinical diagnosis, which means the symptoms will indicate the diagnosis.

Avoiding the offending allergen is always indicated, but almost always impossible. Testing is usually not indicated. Therefore treatment is based on severity of symptoms. Most people can be adequately treated with over-the-counter antihistamines like Benadryl, Zyrtec or Claritin. However, when symptoms are moderate to severe there are a multitude of treatments that work well.

So the next time you see snow in June, July or August, hope it is the kind that is wet and wonderful. If it is not wet and wonderful, be thankful if you do not have allergic rhinitis. If you are one of the unfortunate few that have to deal with it, contact your healthcare provider to see if there is a specific treatment plan that will alleviate some of your misery.

The reference for this article was an online data base called UpToDate. This database is one of many used by providers to find the most current treatment for a specific disease process.

For more information on natural methods for alleviating allergy symptoms, please visit www.rubyvalleyhospital.com.

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