



Are You Ready for Fall Allergies?



Back-to-school season is in full gear, signaling the end of summer and the beginning of fall. While cooler temperatures provide relief from the heat, they also lead to another season - allergy season.

Louisiana Health & Fitness Magazine spoke with Dr. Sonia Kamboj of Breathe Easy Allergy and Asthma about being prepared for the change of seasons.

Q: What are the most common allergies in the fall and what are their symptoms?

A: Allergies can affect several systems, including the sino-nasal tract, eyes, lungs, and skin. High levels of weed and ragweed pollen, which start in late August and often last until the holidays, are usually the culprits. This pollen can trigger Allergic Rhinitis and Conjunctivitis, also known as "hay fever," causing symptoms such

as a runny, itchy nose and watery eyes. Symptoms may start as a relatively mild irritation but can lead to chronic conditions, causing fatigue, sinus infections, and decreased quality of life. Asthmatic children and adults may experience increased respiratory symptoms, such as coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath. Eczema sufferers may also find that they are more likely to have flare-ups during this time of year due to changes in temperature, humidity and environmental allergens.

Q: How can you tell the difference between a cold and allergies?

A: It can be difficult to distinguish a cold from allergies or hay fever. Most common colds and viral sinus infections will resolve without antibiotics within two weeks. Fever may occur with acute illnesses. Over-the-counter medications and sinus rinses may provide temporary relief. If symptoms worsen or persist beyond two weeks, consider seeing a physician.

Symptoms that occur with certain changes of season, that last for several weeks, and that are not accompanied by fever may actually be related to allergies.

Q: At what point should I consider seeing an allergist?

A: Chronic allergies usually occur at a specific time of year and last for several weeks. A board-certified allergist/immunologist can conduct testing to identify triggers and discuss allergen avoidance and environmental controls, which decrease exposure to the allergens in question. An allergist can also prescribe medication to alleviate symptoms and recommend long-term treatments such as allergy shots, which can desensitize an allergy sufferer to the offending triggers. When quality of life is compromised from chronic allergy symptoms, consider seeing an allergist/immunologist.

Q: How can allergic symptoms be prevented?

A: Identifying and treating allergies early can improve quality of life and prevent complications. Outdoor allergies usually manifest after age three, but indoor allergies may develop within the first few years of life. One common misconception is that a very young child cannot be tested for allergies. In fact, board-certified allergists can test for allergic triggers at any age.

At Breathe Easy Allergy and Asthma, we treat patients of all ages - from infants to octogenarians. We believe that it is never too early or too late to create a specialized medical treatment plan for patients. Allergy immunotherapy or “shots” are customized injections that build up immunity and cause a “desensitized” state so that the patient gains tolerance to their allergic triggers. Allergy shots may be an option for children as young as age five.



Q: How can I prepare my child for going back to school?

A: If your child suffers from food allergies or asthma, it is important to visit your doctor for up-to-date rescue medications such as albuterol inhalers and self-injectable epinephrine devices. Schools also need to be aware of a child's dietary restrictions and will often ask for a detailed dietary modification plan and an allergy action plan in case of a reaction. Children with asthma should keep a rescue inhaler at the school

with instructions for use. Be sure to check the expiration date for injectable epinephrine devices and rescue inhalers, as these usually expire within 12 to 18 months.



Dr. Sonia Kamboj is a Board-Certified Allergist & Immunologist and a New Orleans native. She specializes in adult and pediatric allergic diseases of all types.

Did you know?

Over one-third of Americans suffer from allergies and/or asthma.

The most common food allergy is milk.

80% of children will outgrow allergies to milk and eggs by school age, but only 20% of children will outgrow allergies to peanuts and tree nuts.

Food allergies that develop later in life are more likely to persist throughout a person's lifetime than those that develop during childhood.

Children who develop eczema and food allergies at an early age are at risk of developing allergic rhinitis and asthma.

There is a self-injectable epi pen which can talk to you and provide step-by-step instructions.

New Orleans has a pollen season that can last more than 9 months! It usually begins in late January or early February and ends around the holiday season.