



ALLERGY UPDATE

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Pollen-Related Allergies Can Last Nearly All Year Long

Depending on where you live, there are generally three pollen seasons. The start and end dates of these seasons, as well as the specific plants involved, vary by climate.

Trees generally pollinate in the spring. Birch, cedar, cottonwood and pine are big allergy triggers. Grass releases its pollen in the summer. Timothy, Johnson and rye grasses are all examples of allergens in this category. Weeds cause hay fever in the fall. Ragweed is the biggest offender as it can grow in nearly every environment.

Avoiding your allergy triggers is the best way to reduce symptoms. Limit outdoor activities during days with high pollen counts. Keep windows closed (at home and in the car) to keep pollens out. Take a shower after coming indoors. Pollen in your hair can get on your pillow and cause allergy problems at night.

Allergies can't be diagnosed by medical history alone. An allergist/immunologist can diagnose your allergies, and then determine the specific triggers that cause them, through simple tests.

If you have allergies, you may want to keep track of pollen counts in your area through the National Allergy Bureau's website at www.aaaai.org/global/nab-pollen-counts.aspx.

— Source: *American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*



Caring for you and about you



April Is Foot Health Awareness Month *High Heels and Foot Health*

High heels can cause problems ranging from blisters, corns and calluses to serious foot, knee and back pain. Following the four “Gs” will help you to enjoy wearing them without damaging your feet.

- **Glamour** — Let high heels give you that extra “sparkle” and save them for special occasions.
- **Glide** — Slow down and take smaller steps. Put your heel down first and glide.
- **Guide** — Follow this fitting guide: Look for ½ inch of space between your longest toe and the end of the shoe. Make sure that you can wiggle your toes, that there’s no pressure on the joints on the sides of your foot and that the shoe doesn’t slip in the back.
- **Give** — After wearing heels, enjoy a relaxing foot bath and a moisturizing massage.

— Source: *The Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists*

Talk to Your Pharmacist *Keep All Prescriptions at One Pharmacy to Protect Your Health*

Your pharmacist is an important partner in protecting your health. Having all your prescriptions filled at one pharmacy allows the pharmacist to maintain a complete record of all medications you are taking. This record assists the pharmacist in identifying potential medication problems such as:

- Drug allergies
- Interactions with other drugs you are taking
- Incorrect drug dosage or length of treatment
- Therapeutic duplication with other drugs being taken
- Inappropriate use of a drug

You can also talk with your pharmacist about any questions you have about a particular medication. And be sure to share with him or her a list of over-the-counter supplements or herbal medications you may be taking, as the pharmacist can check to make sure these don’t interact with any prescription medications you are taking.

The pharmacist is required to keep all patient information confidential.

— Source: *Texas State Board of Pharmacy*



Migraines: *Your Doctor Can Help*

A migraine headache can cause intense throbbing in one area of the head and is commonly accompanied by nausea, vomiting, and extreme sensitivity to light and sound. Migraines can cause significant pain for hours to days. Some are preceded or accompanied by sensory warning symptoms (aura), such as flashes of light, blind spots, or tingling in your arm or leg.

Medications can help reduce the frequency and severity of migraines. The right medicines, combined with self-help remedies and lifestyle changes recommended by your doctor, may make a big difference.

See your doctor immediately or go to the emergency room if you have any of the following symptoms, which may indicate other,

more serious medical problems:

- An abrupt, severe headache like a thunderclap
- Headache with fever, stiff neck, mental confusion, seizures, double vision, weakness, numbness or trouble speaking
- Headache after a head injury, especially if the headache gets worse
- A chronic headache that is worse after coughing, exertion, straining or a sudden movement
- New headache pain if you’re older than 50

— Source: *Mayo Clinic*

SENIOR HEALTH

Tips for Older-Driver Safety

Driving can sometimes be challenging for older adults. Physical changes can make certain actions, such as turning your head to check for traffic or driving at night, more challenging. Here are some tips that can help:

- **Stay physically active.** This improves your strength and flexibility and can make you a safer driver by making it easier to turn the steering wheel, look over your shoulder and make other movements while driving and parking. Walking, stretching and strength training can all help.
- **Schedule regular vision and hearing tests.** Ask your doctor how often you should have these tests. Problems may be easier to correct if caught early.
- **Don't drive if you have taken a medication that can cause drowsiness or dizziness.** If you are concerned about medication side effects and driver safety, talk with your doctor or pharmacist.

— Source: Mayo Clinic



DID YOU KNOW?

According to the National Institutes of Health, certain groups of people are at risk of getting inadequate amounts of vitamin C. These include:

- Smokers and those exposed to second-hand smoke
- Individuals who don't regularly eat a wide variety of foods, including fruits and vegetables
- People who have medical conditions that can reduce the absorption of vitamin C, such as certain intestinal conditions

Symptoms of low vitamin C levels may include fatigue, inflamed gums, joint pain or poor wound healing. If you are concerned that you may not be getting enough vitamin C, talk with your doctor or pharmacist.

— Source: National Institutes of Health



Is It a Sore Throat? Or Strep? Illness Is More Common in Kids

Strep throat is an infection that occurs at any age, but is most frequent among school-aged children. Symptoms include fever, sore throat and tender/swollen neck glands. Not all sore throats are caused by strep, and most are viral. Strep should be diagnosed by a doctor. Throat cultures usually take 24 to 48 hours. Rapid strep tests can be used to diagnose strep within minutes.

The strep bacterium is spread through direct contact with mucus from the nose or throat of infected persons or through the air by sneezing or coughing. People can spread the strep bacterium to others until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment or for 10 to 21 days if untreated.

Strep can be treated with antibiotics. Treatment is important to prevent serious complications such as rheumatic fever and kidney disease. Infected children should be excluded from child care/school and infected food handlers should be excluded from work until 24 hours after starting treatment.

To help reduce the chances of spreading strep throat, sneeze or cough into the crook of your arm, wash your hands after blowing your nose, and wash your hands before preparing food. See your doctor if you or your child develop symptoms of strep throat.

— Source: Maryland Department of Health's Epidemiological & Disease Programs



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TEEN HEALTH Q&A

Answers to Your Questions

Q: How can I make menstrual cramps less painful?

A: Relax with a warm water bottle or heating pad on your lower back or lower belly. Gentle exercise, especially stretching, can also be helpful. Don't ever take medication for menstrual cramps — or for any other reason — without permission from a parent or guardian.

Q: I'm 12 years old and recently got my period for the first time. Do I need to douche after my period is over each month?

A: Vaginal discharge and having your period might feel messy to you at first. But rinsing or cleaning out the vagina with douche (cleansing with a special product sold for this purpose) is not a good idea. "Douching" can make you more likely to get vaginal infections. To keep feeling fresh, wash your outer vaginal area with gentle, scent-free soap and try using panty liners when you're not having your period.

— Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health

Your Child's Teeth Tips for a Positive First Dental Experience

Schedule your child's first dental visit between the arrival of the first tooth and his or her first birthday. If possible, schedule a morning appointment, when young children tend to be rested and more cooperative. Stay positive! You can help by keeping to yourself any anxiety that you might feel about dental visits. Try to make your child's dental visit an enjoyable outing. Teaching your child good oral hygiene habits early can lead to a lifetime of good dental health.

— Source: American Dental Association

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