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TO OUR PATIENTS: AN OVERVIEW OF ALLERGIES AND THEIR TREATMENT

INTRODUCTION:

We, at Advanced ENT, have noticed that our patients have many misconceptions about allergies and their treatments so we created this information guide. We hope it will be helpful.

We develop symptoms of allergies such as nasal congestion, itchy and watery eyes, congested and runny nose and scratchy throats when our membranes are exposed to the things that we are allergic to. These “things” are called allergens and can be pollens, dust mites, molds and other offenders. If an allergic individual is exposed, he/she will develop varying degrees of the allergic symptoms.

Allergic symptoms occur when the allergic individual is exposed to the allergen. An allergic reaction involving the allergic antibody (IgE), mast cells and basophils occurs. There is release of substances such as histamine, which causes the symptoms (histamine causes itching, blood vessel dilation which causes congestion) that we associated with being allergic.

COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO TREATING ALLERGIES:

RULE 1: AVOID WHAT YOU ARE ALLERGIC TO AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE:

i.e., If you are about to be exposed; be smart, wear a mask.

RULE 2: IF EXPOSED, WASH IT AWAY:

Clean under the bed, work in the garden, cut the grass: Wash your face, rinse your nose, gargle, take a shower. Wash the allergen away!

RULE 3: START AN ALLERGY THERAPY:

TREATMENTS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO:

1. NASAL SPRAYS:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| a. Nasal Saline | d. Nasal Cromolyn |
| b. Nasal Steroids | e. Nasal Antihistamine |
| c. Nasal Decongestants* | |

*An acute treatment only. Some can cause rebound swelling, increased heart rate, high blood pressure and should not be used for more than 3 days. Can be habit forming if overused.

The use of a Neti Pot with clean or distilled or sterile water to make the saline solution is helpful to many patients. We recommend that you first watch a video on a person using a Neti Pot so that you can learn how to best use it.

www.neti-pot.com

2. ORAL MEDICATIONS:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| a. Antihistamines | c. Leukotriene Inhibitors |
| b. Decongestants | d. Antihistamine-Decongestant Combination |

3. IMMUNOTHERAPY:

a. Allergy Shots

b. Sublingual Therapy

BASIC REVIEW OF ALLERGY MEDICATIONS:

One only needs to walk through the medicine aisle in the supermarket or be bombarded by TV commercials to get confused about what these medicines are and which medications to use. Medications can be divided into types:

ANTI-HISTAMINES – Block the action of histamine and therefore, prevent some allergy symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose or itchy eyes, nose or throat. They may or may not make one drowsy and they can dry you up. Examples of some antihistamines include Benadryl, Chlor-Trimeton, Claritin, Clarinex, Allegra, Zyrtec and Xyzal.

The first generation antihistamines Benadryl (Diphenhydramine) and Chlor-Trimeton (Chlorpheniramine) are the ones most noted for the side-effects of sedation, which can impair driving and work performance. They can also cause blurred vision, dry mouth, urinary retention and constipation. The second generation antihistamines have limited potential to cause these side effects.

DECONGESTANTS – Decongestants act on receptors in the nasal mucus membranes which causes the smaller blood vessels to vasoconstrict. The result is that they reduce nasal congestion. They are not noted for improving runny nose, sneezing, nasal itching or eye symptoms as antihistamines do.

Decongestants can have side effects. They can elevate blood pressure, cause rapid heart rate and heart palpitations and arrhythmias. Other side effects can include nervousness, difficulty sleeping, dizziness and restlessness.

ORAL LEUKOTRIENE INHIBITORS – i.e., Singulair. Leukotrienes are released in the nasal membranes after exposure to allergens. They will reduce the symptoms of allergic rhinitis. They are not sedating and will not dry you up.

NASAL STEROIDS – Intranasal corticosteroids reduce the number of cells involved in nasal inflammation. They may take 12 hours to work and maximum benefit is achieved after days to weeks but can be very effective.

Side effects may include nasal bleeding, burning, altered sense of smell and taste. Despite the fear of taking “steroids” there is a very low risk of systemic side effects. Increased intraocular pressure (risk of glaucoma) is very rare.

NASAL CROMOLYN SPRAY – Nasalcrom is a Cromolyn nasal spray which stabilizes the mast cells in the nose. This results in inhibiting the release of histamine and other inflammatory mediators. This reduces congestion and runny nose.