

HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter
www.astate.edu/conhp



Asthma & Allergy Awareness

Overview

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AFFA) declares May "National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month." Asthma affects 24 million Americans and more than 20 million Americans suffer from some sort of allergy. There is no cure for these two common problems, but there is proper treatment and care.

Asthma

Asthma is a chronic disease that inflames the airway, making it difficult to breathe. The airways to the lungs close slowly, but symptoms may not appear until the airway is badly blocked. The best tactic for treating this disease is to avoid triggers and to take preventive and/or treatment medications.

Asthma Statistics

- Average 1 out of 10 school aged children have asthma
- Boys are more likely to have asthma than girls

- Asthma death rate is highest for people over 65

Asthma Symptoms

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid breathing
- Chest Tightness

Asthma Emergency Symptoms

- Fast breathing with chest retractions (skin sucking in around the chest/ribs)
- Pale or blue coloring of the face, lips, and/or fingernails
- Rapid movement of nostrils
- Expanded chest that does not deflate when you breathe out
- Infants with asthma who fail to respond or recognize parents

Common Asthma Triggers

- Dust mites
- Pollens
- Mold
- Pet dander
- Rodents
- Exercise

- Weather
- Strong Emotion
- Air irritants
 - Cigarette smoke
 - Strong fumes
 - Wood fires
 - Charcoal Grills

Asthma Treatments

- Talk with your doctor about correct use of the following
 - Inhalers
 - Nebulizers

Preventing Asthma Episodes

- Know your triggers
 - Ask yourself what you were doing at the time of the attack
 - Discuss these with your doctor to find trends in the asthma attack
- Take your asthma medication as prescribed
- Track your asthma and recognize early signs of worsening symptoms
 - Peak flow meter helps detect narrowing of the

airways before symptoms present

Allergies

Allergies are one of the most common chronic diseases and the most common health issue affecting children. An allergy occurs when the body is exposed to something that the immune system finds harmful, which results in overreaction to the substance. These substances are referred to as *allergens* and the overreaction of the immune system is called an *allergic reaction*. Allergens can enter your body in several ways. They can be inhaled through your nose, ingested by mouth, absorbed in the skin, or entered through the eyes.

Types of Allergies

- Drug allergy
 - Penicillin most common
- Food Allergy
 - Children have food allergies more often than adults
 - Common food allergens
 - Peanuts (most common)
 - Eggs
 - Wheat
 - Tree nuts
 - Fish
 - Shellfish
- Insect Allergy
 - Bees, wasps, hornets, & yellow jackets are the most common source
- Latex Allergy
 - Found in gloves, balloons, and other

natural rubber products

- Mold allergy
 - Year-round allergy
- Pet Allergy
- Pollen Allergy
 - One of the most common seasonal allergies
- Skin Allergy
 - Poison ivy, oak, and sumac are the most common
- Indoor/Outdoor Allergy
 - Seasonal allergies

Symptoms of an Allergic Reaction

- Itchy, watery eyes
- Itchy, watery nose
- Sneezing
- Rash
- Stomach cramps
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Bloating
- Swelling
- Redness
- Pain
- Cough
- Throat closing
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Light headedness

Allergic Emergency

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction that comes on rapidly and can be deadly.

The symptoms are as follows:

- Swelling of lips, tongue, or throat
- Shortness of breath
- Stomach pain, bloating, or vomiting
- Uterine cramps

Treatment for anaphylaxis is to promptly inject medication at the first sign of reaction

and to call 911 even if the symptoms seem to be getting better.

Preventing Allergic Reaction

- Avoid your allergens
- Take your medication as prescribed
- If at risk for anaphylaxis, keep your epinephrine auto-injector with you at all times
- Keep a diary
 - This allows you to identify your allergens
- Know what to do during an emergency allergic reaction such as anaphylaxis (listed above)

Reference

<http://www.aafa.org/page/welcome.aspx>

Other News:

**If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at hanrahan@astate.edu.

The Arkansas State University Employee Wellness Newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Health questions can be addressed to Dean Susan Hanrahan, Ph.D., ext. 3112 or hanrahan@astate.edu. Produced by Jordan Hood, graduate student in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, Physical Therapy Program.