

Splurge - Volume 4 Issue 4 (April 2009)

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ALLERGIES MAKE SPRING NOT SO FRIENDLY

After a long Kansas winter, spring is officially in the air, bringing renewal and a welcome sense of excitement. However, for many people, spring also brings sneezes, scratchy throats and itchy, watery eyes. With the trees and plants budding and blossoming, the pollen counts increase and folks who are prone to hay fever, allergies and asthma experience varying degrees of “sick”.

Common spring allergies cause symptoms that look a lot like a cold that arises out of nowhere and won't go away. There are lots of over-the-counter medications to treat the symptoms. Your physician can help you find relief if over-the-counter medications do not bring the relief you need, or your allergies spark a sinus infection or bronchitis.

Some allergy medications contain ephedra, and I very much advise against taking these, especially without talking with your physician first. Many medications interact poorly with ephedra, including blood pressure medications. Ephedra increases heart rate, and can cause negative consequences for patients with heart disease or heart rhythm problems.

If you have allergies in the spring, what can you do to reduce the severity of symptoms? First of all, other than decongestants and other allergy relievers, be sure to vacuum more often, change your sheets, and bathe before bed. Many people report that their allergies are worse at certain times of day – such as the morning - so keep an eye on pollen counts and pay attention to how your body specifically responds to the environment. Pollen counts are generally higher on warm, windy days, and lower on damp, overcast days, so if you are extremely sensitive, be sure to exercise indoors for a while, change the filters on the vents in your house, and avoid other triggers for allergies (pet dander, dust, etc.).

Thankfully, after spring has sprung, our fine summer will come to rescue most of us from the throat lozenges, tissues, and eye drops we generally keep handy during allergy season. If for any reason, your symptoms seem to worsen or change abruptly, contact your physician as soon as possible.

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