Allergies

Physiology

Allergies are generally a major cause of seasonal or year-round nose and sinus problems. They are caused by an increased release of a chemical substance in the body called histamine, which is responsible for producing the symptoms of itching and sneezing, as well as nasal and sinus congestion.

Allergies can appear at any age of a person's life. They often run in families. Allergic reactions can be caused by things such as certain foods, pollens, dust, animal hair, feathers, molds, soaps, cosmetics and clothes.

Signs and symptoms

Symptoms will vary depending on the allergy. Possible symptoms can include any number of the following:

- Itching and/or tearing eyes
- Skin disorders such as eczema, hives, or rashes
- Chronic colds
- Nasal and/or sinus congestion
- Itching
- Sneezing
- Runny nose

Treatments

**Antihistamines:** Antihistamines neutralize the histamines released by the allergic reaction. They may cause drowsiness as a side effect. It is worthwhile to try various types of antihistamines.

**Decongestants:** Decongestants, or drying agents, are often used alone or in combination with antihistamines to increase effectiveness.

**Steroids:** Steroids may be used to alleviate severe symptoms when antihistamines don’t work. They can be effective for a short time.

**Antibiotics:** Antibiotics are sometimes required because the allergy sufferer tends to have more frequent nasal and sinus infections caused by the obstruction of nasal and sinus passages.

**Shots:** Allergy shots stimulate the development of substances which cause desensitization to different allergens. Desensitization shots can only immunize against airborne allergens such as dust, molds, and pollens, and are generally most effective in cases of seasonal and perennial allergies. They are not used to control food allergies.

**Control Dust:** Eliminate dust as much as possible in the house. Be sure to dust and vacuum frequently. Use a cotton mop and mop spray to ensure efficient dust removal. Also, use disposable furnace filters and change them frequently. Electrostatic furnace filters prove to be the most effective. Finally, remove all unused, dust collecting items.

**Control Mold:** Mold tends to collect in wet, humid areas. Clean bathroom crevices and grout with mold-killing cleanser. Paint the basement with mold-resistant paint. In the basement use a dehumidifier to keep the air dry. Spray the bottoms of all air conditioning units and refrigerators with mold killing agents.

**Eliminate Some Foods:** Identify foods responsible for allergic reaction and eliminate them from your diet.