

## **Pediatric Corner**

By Dr. Michael Anderson, MD  
CHILDREN'S PEDIATRIC CENTER: NORTHSIDE

### **Spring is here: And so are all kinds of allergies**

If you're among the third of Americans with seasonal allergies, you're probably already tired of the sniffing, sneezing and wheezing you've been experiencing now that spring is here.

**Pull Quote: Allergy symptoms typically begin in early childhood, and often peak between 20 and 40 years of age. The risk of allergic reaction depends on a variety of factors, including the type and intensity of allergen exposure, and genetic predisposition.**

Surveys have shown that only half of sufferers consider their allergies to be a serious medical condition, and many sufferers don't consult with a doctor about managing their allergies. In many cases, people confuse allergies with colds.

Seasonal allergies are also known as allergic rhinitis or hay fever, and are caused when the immune system overreacts to irritants in the environment. A major trigger for spring allergies is tree pollen released into the air as trees bud and bloom. Trees that can cause problems include cedar, elm, maple, birch and oak. Normally, the pollen is released in stages, as different trees bloom at different times.

Another spring allergy trigger is mold, which releases spores into the air. Wet winters can provide an ideal breeding ground for mold. When the summer months arrive, it's mainly grass that starts to cause allergy problems. In the fall, weeds are usually the biggest problem.

Allergic reactions range from a simple sneeze to more serious and potentially life-threatening problems, such as asthma. The most common are runny nose, itchy eyes, sneezing, wheezing, sore throat, nasal congestion and cough. Skin irritations and breathing problems can also develop.

Although many of these symptoms are relatively mild, over time they can cause fatigue, insomnia, and problems with concentration and work performance. They can also increase the risk of ear infections and sinusitis.

There are over-the-counter and prescription drugs available to treat allergies. The medications include nasal steroids, antihistamines, and decongestants. Always consult your doctor before taking a treatment.

Antihistamines can be very helpful for itchy eyes and runny nose, but they may not relieve nasal congestion. Some drugs can also cause drowsiness, though there are some available over-the-counter that don't cause as much drowsiness as some other drugs.

It's useful to get a test to determine exactly what you're allergic to, and take steps to avoid contact with it as much as possible. Stay indoors as much as possible, keep your windows closed, wash your bedding regularly, and wash your hair and shower before going to bed. It's also a good idea to try to keep your house as clean as possible.

Michael G. Anderson, MD, FAAP  
Stephanie H. Anderson, DNP, RN, PNP-C, WNP-C  
321 East Main Street • Canton, GA 30114  
(across from the Bank of North Georgia)