



## **Your child has environmental allergies. Now What?**

### **What are allergies?**

An allergy is an over-reaction of the immune system to things in the environment. It may occur due to particles that are everywhere and always present such as dust mites, or to seasonal things like tree pollen, or grass. Allergies can develop at any age. They may or may not be life-long.

### **Do allergies run in families?**

Yes. Allergies and allergic diseases like asthma and eczema tend to run in families. However, a person may develop allergies even if there is no family history.

### **What are the symptoms of allergies?**

Every person may react differently but common symptoms include runny, itchy nose and eyes, itchy throat and skin, sneezing, nasal congestion and hives. Allergies may make asthma symptoms like cough and wheezing worse.

### **How are allergies diagnosed?**

In general, a history of exposure and the body's response to allergens is very helpful. To confirm an allergy, either skin testing or blood work can be done.

### **What can we do to treat allergies?**

Allergies may be treated with medications that help block the immune system response to the allergen. These include antihistamines. Other medications, including nasal steroid sprays help decrease the swelling of the tissues in the nose that react to allergens. Please ask your doctor if an allergy medication may be helpful.

### **How do seasonal allergies change during the year? In the Buffalo area:**

Spring- tree pollens are the major allergen;

Summer- grass is a major allergen, ragweed and other weeds also problematic;

Fall – ragweed until frost occurs, and molds are major allergens;

Winter- indoor allergens are more problematic. Because we spend more time inside, dust and pet dander are the major allergens.

## **Other than medications, what else can I do to make my child more comfortable?**

Don't despair! There are a number of things that can be done to help relieve your child's environmental allergy symptoms. Because your child spends a significant amount of time in his/her bedroom, improving their room environment can improve their quality of life.

1. Before bed, give your child a bath or shower and wash his/her hair to remove any pollen.
2. Change clothes that were worn outside and keep them out of the bedroom.
3. Wash bed sheets/pillow cases weekly in hot water to kill dust mites.
4. Use hypoallergenic pillow covers and bed covers. Replace old mattresses and pillows, if possible.
5. Use synthetic pillows- not down or feather as these collect dust mites and pollens.
6. Obtain a room or whole house dehumidifier. Dust mites like warm, moist environments so removing moisture inhibits dust mites.
7. Use a room air purifier with HEPA filter that can help remove pollens and dust mites.
8. Remove all rugs from bedroom. Remove dust collectors such as stuffed animals from bedroom.
9. Keep pets out of bedroom and bed if sensitive to them.
10. Rinse nose before bed with nasal saline spray to remove allergens that have collected in the nose during the daytime.
11. Sleep with head elevated to help decrease nasal congestion.
12. Vacuum or damp mop floors, and dust or vacuum window coverings weekly.

If you have any questions, please feel free to discuss them with your health care provider.



**Find your allergy triggers and breathe easy!**