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# CONNECTIONS

## LOCAL EFAP NEWS

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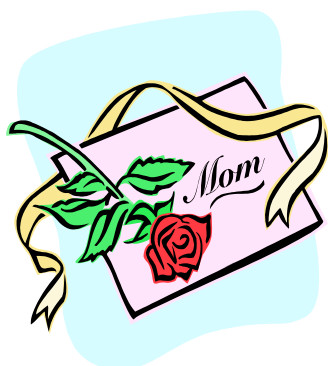
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**Happy Mother's  
Day  
Sunday, May 14th**

## Allergies: A Positive Approach

### NO Need to Suffer

Over 50 million people in America suffer from allergies with hay fever being the most common form. Costs are estimated to exceed \$10 billion annually, including workplace absenteeism, decreased productivity and medical care. The good news is, there is much you can do to alleviate suffering and even rid yourself of allergies forever.

### Allergy Basics

Allergies can be characterized as the "immune system gone wrong". What happens: harmless substances, such as dust or pollen, are mistakenly perceived as harmful by your immune system, which attacks them, producing negative side effects. Symptoms range from runny nose and wheezing to skin rashes and stomach discomfort. Allergies can cause sinusitis (sinus infections), hay fever, asthma, hives and rashes. People also experience reactions to foods, insect stings and drugs. Causes of allergies have their roots in heredity, the nervous system and environmental irritants.

### Common Allergy Triggers

Allergy triggers may be inhaled, eaten, injected, experienced or merely contacted. Common triggers include:

- Pollen and mold
- Household dust
- Industrial chemicals and cleaning products
- Animal dander and feathers
- Food (such as eggs, shellfish, citrus fruits, dairy products, soy, wheat, too much protein and yeasts), food additives and preservatives (such as benzoates, sulfites, benzaldehyde and artificial colors)
- Certain medicines (such as penicillin)
- Insect stings
- Stress and emotional upset

### Allergy Prevention & Relief:

#### Re-educating Your Immune System

1. Find a health care practitioner who understands your needs and offers a positive approach which suits your thinking and lifestyle. For example: a family practitioner, internist, pediatrician or allergy specialist.

2. Identify the exact cause(s) of your allergies. This may include a skin, blood or breathing test.

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## 3. Practice prevention:

\* Avoid or modify your dietary and environmental triggers. Consider using an air filter in your home, office or car.

\* Ask your doctor about nutritional supplements. Certain supplements can help raise your trigger threshold when complete avoidance is not possible. Also, be aware that allergic reactions may be aggravated by certain nutritional deficiencies. With the guidance of your practitioner, consider taking: *Antioxidants*, including grape seed extract, vitamin E and C. *Quercetin* - a bioflavonoid that is antihistaminic and antiallergenic. *Fish oil* - a natural anti-inflammatory.

\* Try stress-reducing techniques. Eliminate sources of stress when possible, and then learn techniques for modifying your reaction to stress. Practice some form of stress reduction daily, such as breathing exercises, meditation or even soaking in a tub.

\* Don't be afraid to seek psychological counselling for chronic stress.

4. Consider one of the new non-sedating or prescription antihistamine pills or a steroid nasal spray (which does not have the side effects that oral steroids have).

\* Try natural remedies first, then, if necessary, medication. If already on medication, consider working with your practitioner to coordinate natural approaches with decreasing medication.

\* Use caution with conventional over-the-counter or prescription antihistamines, as many can cause depression and drowsiness and interfere with brain activity. Be sure to read the side effects listed on the container.

\* Get emergency help if an allergic reaction is life threatening. And injection of epinephrine administered by a medical professional will usually stop the reaction.

\* Do not take steroid drugs unless absolutely necessary, as they can prolong allergies and lower immunity.

\* Ask your doctor about allergy vaccination, formerly referred to as immunotherapy. It works in severe cases.

## What About Asthma?

Asthma, which affects 15 million Americans is a relatively new disease. It was virtually unknown 100 years ago and is still rare in developing countries. Environmental, genetic and dietary factors are major causes of asthma's steady rise over the past four decades - more than doubling since 1980. Asthma is more prevalent in areas with higher pollution levels, especially with children. An estimated 5,000 people die each year from asthma.

Asthma is a chronic disease that constricts the airflow to the lungs. There are two types of asthma:

- Allergic asthma (atopic asthma) is more common in children, is sometimes outgrown and is often associated with hay fever.
- Non-allergic asthma (intrinsic asthma) is more common in adults and is typically associated with emotional stress and respiratory infections.

Frequency, duration and severity of asthma symptoms vary significantly. Some people may experience symptoms ranging from a chronic dry cough to wheezing and severe shortness of breath. Asthma attacks generally subside in a few hours, even without treatment. Severe, prolonged attacks, however, can be fatal.

**For EMERGENCY RELIEF** of severe attacks, keep a bronchial inhaler on hand. Remember it does nothing to reduce underlying inflammation, and overuse can be dangerous.

**For LONG-TERM RELIEF**, follow the same course as for allergies. In addition, with the supervision of your practitioner, consider taking magnesium to help relax the bronchial tubes and the smooth muscle of the esophagus.

## More You Should Know About Allergies

- Use conventional antihistamines with caution. They merely suppress the allergic response, and regular use of them may actually increase immune system over-responsiveness.
- Keep your immune system in shape with exercise, proper diet and stress reduction techniques.
- Remember that allergies can be developed in midlife from the cumulative effects of correctable factors such as stress, environmental toxins and poor diet. You can change your fate ... and improve the quality of your life.

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