Overview of Allergic Rhinitis (Hay Fever)

By Nabeh LaHood M.D.

Do you feel tired? Do you feel exhausted? Do you feel agitated?

Before you blame these symptoms on working hard or that your kids are driving you crazy, think about allergies. If you get nasal congestion, runny nose, itchy eyes and nose, teary eyes, post nasal drip, recurrent headaches plus the above mentioned symptoms of tiredness, exhaustion and agitation, it means you have hay fever, which is sinus allergy. About 35% of Americans have sinus allergies which cause many absences from work and school.

Exposure to dusting, lawn mowing and animal dander may aggravate allergies. Yes, your cat or dog could be the cause of your allergies. Allergic patients have a threefold increased chance to develop asthma. If you are born in the spring (March, April or May) and you have a family history of allergies, tough luck! It is 100% certain you will develop allergies. Allergies also predispose you to recurrent sinus and chest infections.

Look at your face in the mirror. A line across your nose and dark circles under your eyes are signs of allergies. Allergic kids may:

- Develop orofacial deformities requiring orthodontic intervention because of mouth breathing.
- Have recurrent sinusitis, ear infections and bronchitis.
- Have learning disabilities from the effect of recurrent ear infections that may cause hearing loss, and, the fact, that allergies make them sleepy.
- Have increase chances to develop asthma.

Tips to Avoid Allergies

- Keep the windows closed during the Spring and Fall seasons when the pollen count is high. Wash your hair before going to sleep to get
rid of pollen.

✓ Put plastic covers on your mattress and pillow.
✓ Keep the pets outside the bedrooms and preferably outside the house.
✓ Wash the cat (good luck) and the dog regularly.
✓ Take non-sedating antihistamine medication if you have nasal congestion. Antihistamine medications may make you sleepy, so please be careful while driving if you take them.

If the above measures do not work then it is time to see the Doctor for further medical treatment.

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