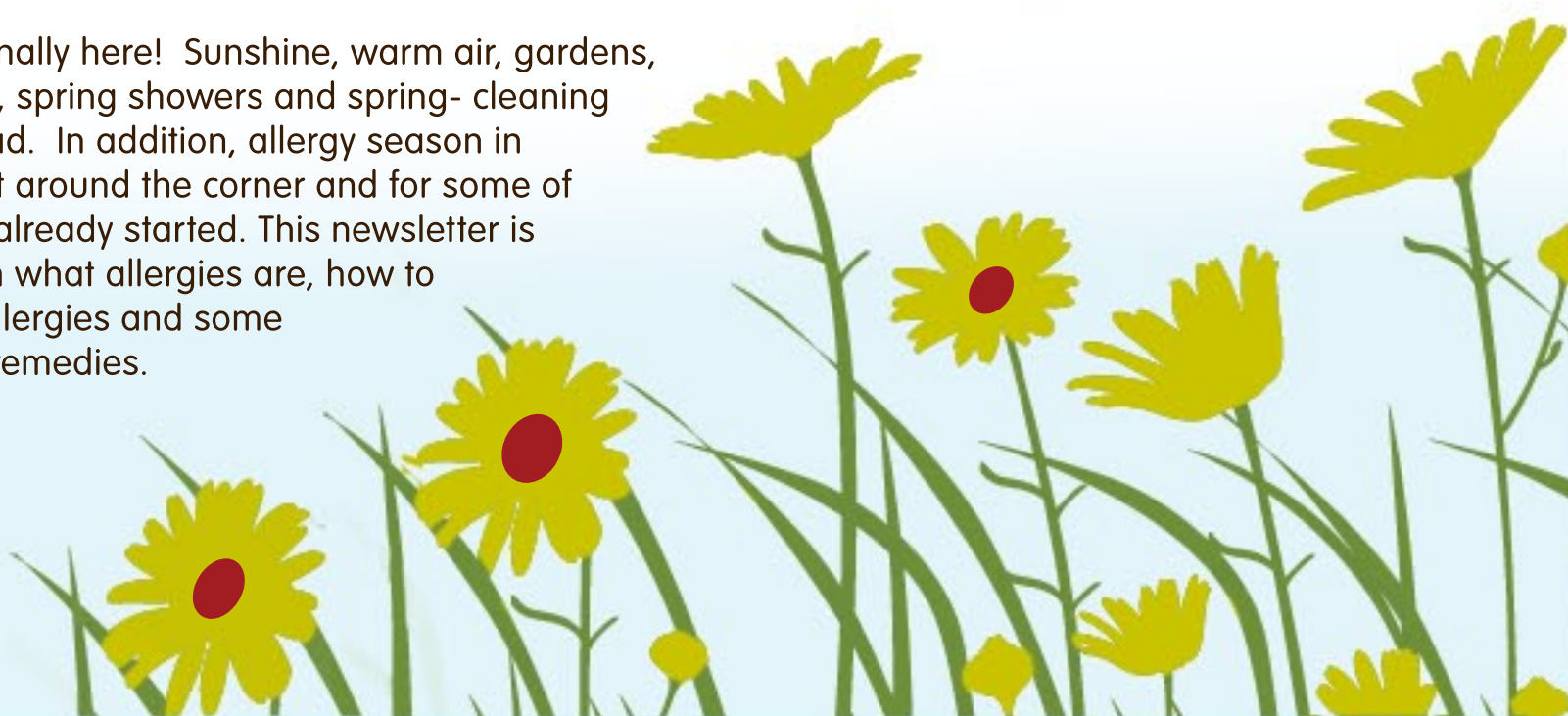


SPRING HAS ARRIVED!



Spring is finally here! Sunshine, warm air, gardens, bike riding, spring showers and spring- cleaning all lie ahead. In addition, allergy season in Ohio is just around the corner and for some of you it has already started. This newsletter is focused on what allergies are, how to manage allergies and some non-drug remedies.



What are symptoms of allergies?

Substances called allergens cause allergies. Allergies can involve several different symptoms. A common symptom is nasal congestion, which is called allergic rhinitis. Allergic rhinitis may involve a cough. Another symptom is itchy, watery eyes and is called allergic conjunctivitis. Hay fever is a term used for combined eye and nose allergy symptoms. Allergens can also provoke an allergic response in the skin for some people and can be the cause of eczema, an immune dysfunction of the skin. There is also a syndrome called oral allergy syndrome which primarily relates to food allergies (which is beyond the scope of this newsletter) but may occasionally be seen with environmental allergies. Oral allergy syndrome involves an itchy sensation in the back of the throat after exposure to an allergen. Allergens that cause environmental allergies are airborne particles. Seasonal allergies are caused by outdoor allergens such as weed, grass and tree pollens and fungus. Fungus is often worse after a rain as spores are released in the air then. Perennial or year-round allergens include pet dander, cockroaches, mites and indoor mold.

What happens in the body with allergies?

Allergies are caused by an over-sensitive immune response. The immune system protects the body from harmful substances. When a person is allergic to something, antibodies called IgE are produced. The IgE attaches to mast cells. When IgE antibodies are stimulated by an allergen the mast cell will break down to release inflammatory chemicals such as histamine and leukotrienes. These inflammatory chemicals cause itching, swelling, watery eyes, nasal congestion, rashes and hives.

Allergies or a Cold?

Sometimes determining if your child is allergic to something or has the common cold can be difficult. Take a look at the chart below to see symptoms of both. If you are not sure what is going on with your child, it is advisable to make an appointment with your health care provider.

Common Cold	Allergies
Runny nose, Starts clear turns green/yellow	Runny nose with clear discharge
Sore throat	Congestion
Congestion	Sneezing
Cough	Itchy nose with or without crease at bottom
Headache	Red eyes with tearing
Fever, usually low grade	Dark circles under eyes
Usually occur in the winter	Usually occur seasonally although some allergens like dust, dust mites are present year round

Avoiding Allergies

The best treatment for allergies is to try to avoid the allergen before symptoms occur. Here are some ideas for trying to eliminate common allergens. The list below can be overwhelming. It may not be possible to incorporate all these changes, doing as many as possible can really make a difference in the severity of allergy symptoms.

- Get rid of dust trapping items such as stuffed animals, heavy drapes, and upholstered furniture. For children with allergies, at the very least, stuffed animals should not be on the bed or in a crib.
- Use an airtight, allergy-proof plastic cover on all mattresses, pillows and box springs. (These items may be ordered through our office). Ideally, allergy covers should be non-chemically treated cotton with a pore size of less than 5 microns to eliminate penetration by dust, dust mites and pollen.
- Wash all bedding and stuffed animals in hot water every 7-14 days. Also, use the dryer to dry clothing and stuffed animals. Line drying clothes and linens outside will only serve to bring the allergens indoors. Change pillow case(s) nightly.
- Keep pets out of your child's room and wash pets once a week to remove allergens. In addition, pets should not be on the couches or beds throughout the house.
- Remove carpeting if possible.
- Vacuum frequently. If possible when your child with allergies is not in the room.
- Avoid the use of ceiling fans.
- Cover air vents with air filters.
- For seasonal allergies, keep windows closed in the car and home. Air conditioning is best for seasonal allergies when possible.
- Limit outdoor activities when pollen counts are highest. Avoid early morning for spring tree pollens and grass, afternoon and early evening for summer grasses and afternoon for ragweed and mold in the fall.
- Provide a smoke-free environment for your child in the home and in the car.
- Move showers to the end of day. Washing hair is important to remove allergens and to prevent them from being transferred to your pillow.
- Indoor air purification systems are often helpful. There are ones for the whole house, which can get expensive. Consider small portable air purifiers that are room units especially for the bedroom.
- Change clothes as soon as coming in from the outdoors in order to minimize the continued exposure to pollen. Also, take shoes off at the front door or outside as shoes and clothes both retain outdoor pollen when coming inside.

Non-Drug remedies for allergies

- **Saline nasal rinses:** this can be one of the most effective practices to minimize allergy symptoms by removing allergens from the nasal passages. Saline, which is a balanced salt solution helps to break up mucous. Saline nasal flushing can be accomplished in several ways. Saline drops or sprays may be sufficient for mild nasal symptoms. For patients with more severe symptoms, using a neti pot or other sinus rinsing products may be more helpful. These products will pour a lukewarm saline solution into one nostril and drain out the other side. While this may sound weird at first, it is one of the most effective treatments for sinus congestion, often recommended by ear, nose and throat physicians. It can be very effective for both allergies and colds.
- **Homeopathic remedies:** Homeopathic remedies that include ingredients such as euphrasia, allium cepa or pulsatilla can be helpful. These can be taken internally. For allergic conjunctivitis, there are homeopathic eye drops made by Similasan called Allergy Eye Relief or by Boiron called Optique. These products are available in several pharmacy chains. WholeKids may be carrying these items. Please call to see if we have these in stock as we develop our in house store.
- **Herbs** that can be effective for allergies include nettles, boswellia and butterbur. These herbs modulate the inflammatory response of allergies. These are specialized herbs and working with your health care provider to incorporate these herbs into a treatment plan would be best. Butterbur in particular can have toxic side effects if the correct preparation is not used.
- **Vitamin C** can help to modulate the immune response and lower inflammation. The dose for Vitamin C is 1-2gm (1000-2000mg) per day. Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits but it is difficult to eat enough to get the immune effect. For example, an 8oz. glass of orange juice has about 120mg of Vitamin C. It would be difficult to drink 10 glasses a day of orange juice not to mention the extra calories and sugar that come with that much OJ!
- **Quercetin** is a substance that belongs to a group of natural chemicals called flavinoids. Flavonoids give food their color. Quercetin is found in apples, onions and herbs such as fennel and tarragon. Incorporating these foods on a regular basis can have an effect long term but it is difficult to eat enough to get a therapeutic effect. Quercetin acts in treating allergies by helping to stabilize cells involved in the allergic response and preventing the release of inflammatory chemicals. Dosing for quercetin is about 500mg twice a day. Ideally, it should be taken with vitamin C as quercetin is poorly absorbed and vitamin C will enhance absorption.

Long-term management of allergy symptoms requires supporting the underlying immune system that is not functioning well. Allergy symptoms can be severe enough to disrupt sleep, cause decreased energy levels, and create behavioral changes in the most severe cases. In addition, uncontrolled allergies can increase the risk for getting secondary sinus and ear infections and can definitely make asthma symptoms worse. Allergies will place stress on the body and can lead to a condition of chronic stress. Reducing stress and supporting the immune system is the goal of integrative medical care for allergy symptoms.

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