

Spring into action against allergies

April 13 2009, By Joe Miller

It's spring allergy season, and many of you are ready to wave the white flag -- a wad of tissues, that is -- in surrender.

Yet hopeless as your battle against pollen, mold and mites might seem, allergists and others who deal with rhinitis problems say you shouldn't sentence yourself to life indoors just yet.

"A lot of time people who have been walking around with allergies for years think they're saddled with it," said Dr. John Sundry of Duke Medicine's Division of Pulmonary, Allergy and Critical Care. "There are a lot of options."

1. Avoidance

The best way to avoid allergies is to steer clear of the irritants. "You don't want to take the outdoors inside with you," said Dr. James Sublett, of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.

Start at the front door. "Use a tracking mat to wipe your feet," he said. "Actually, it's a good idea to take your shoes off," as well as your clothes, and deposit them directly in the washer. And take a shower, especially before going to bed.

And there are options to be leery of. "We don't recommend ionizers that produce ozone," Sublett said of one often-hyped treatment for allergy sufferers. "Ozone is bad for you."

2. Medications

Both Sublett and Sundy say medications can be effective in treating allergy symptoms.

"Start with a saline irrigation of the nose," Sundy said. Rinse kits are commercially available, or you can make your own solution, according to www.about.com. Rinses can reduce sinus swelling, making it easier for your body to rid itself of whatever is irritating you.

"The next step would be an oral antihistamine," Sundy said.

Probably the most effective treatment for reducing allergy symptoms is nasal steroid sprays, Sundy said, because "they significantly reduce the [inflammatory response](#) in the nose that's responsible for causing allergy symptoms."

3. Shots

The goal of shots is to gradually build up immunity by injecting increasingly larger doses of the [allergen](#) into the body. According to Sublett, the treatment usually begins with a flurry of shots -- two or three a week for two to four weeks -- followed by "maintenance" shots every two to four weeks. A patient may have to stay on that regimen for years.

Sometimes the [allergy](#) disappears for good; sometimes it reappears after a few years. The treatment is generally most effective for folks with year-round allergies.

The biggest drawback: the commitment.

(c) 2009, The News & Observer (Raleigh, N.C.).

Visit The News & Observer online at www.newsobserver.com/

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

Citation: Spring into action against allergies (2009, April 13) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-04-action-allergies.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.