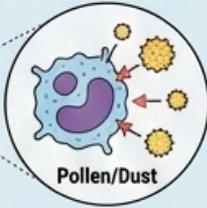


Understanding & Managing Your Allergies:

A Patient Handout from Your Family Medicine Provider



What Are Allergies?

Allergies occur when your immune system overreacts to normally harmless substances (pollen, dust mites, pet dander, mold), causing sneezing, runny nose, congestion, and itchy eyes.

Proper management can significantly improve quality of life.

Common Allergy Triggers

Outdoor (Seasonal)



- Tree pollen (spring)
- Grass pollen (late spring/summer)
- Weed pollen (fall)
- Mold spores

Indoor (Year-Round)



- Dust mites (bedding, carpets)
- Pet dander (furry animals)
- Mold spores
- Cockroaches/rodents

Irritants (Worsen Symptoms)



- Cigarette smoke
- Strong odors/perfumes
- Air pollution
- Gas stoves
- Chemical fumes



Environmental Control: Reducing Your Exposure



- Keep windows closed on high pollen days, use A/C. Check daily pollen counts.

- Keep pets out of bedroom.
- Use HEPA filters.
- Bathe pets regularly.



- Use dust mite-proof encasements.
- Wash bedding weekly in hot water (130°F).
- Keep humidity 30-50%.



- Fix leaks promptly.
- Use exhaust fans.
- Keep humidity <50%.



Nasal Saline Irrigation (Safe & Effective)



1. Use sterile/distilled water (NEVER tap).
2. Lean over sink, tilt head.
3. Gently squeeze saline into one nostril.
4. Allow to drain from other nostril.
5. Repeat. (Do 1-2 times daily).

Benefits:

- Clears mucus/allergens
- Moisturizes passages
- Reduces congestion.



Over-the-Counter Medications (Options & Use)

Oral Antihistamines

(Sneezing, Itching, Runny Nose)



- Preferred non-drowsy (Loratadine, Cetirizine, Fexofenadine, Levocetirizine)
- Take daily/as needed.

⚠️ **AVOID** Benadryl (drowsiness).

Nasal Corticosteroid Sprays

(Most Effective for Nasal Symptoms)



- Fluticasone, Triamcinolone, Budesonide.
- Use daily for full effect.
- Best for moderate/severe allergies.

Eye Drops

(Itchy, Watery Eyes)



- Antihistamine drops (ketotifen, olopatadine).
- Artificial tears.

Nasal Decongestants



- Nasal sprays (oxymetazoline) – **MAX 3 DAYS USE.**

🔔 How to Use Nasal Sprays Correctly

- Blow nose gently first.
- Keep head upright.
- Aim away from center wall.
- Spray while breathing in gently.
- Do not sniff hard.



When to Seek Medical Care



See Your Provider if:

- Uncontrolled symptoms with OTC meds
- Medication side effects
- Interferes with daily activities/sleep
- Symptoms > few months/year
- Have asthma/sinus infections
- Want testing/immunotherapy.



Seek **EMERGENCY** Care if:

- Difficulty breathing
- Swelling (face/throat)
- Severe hives/rash
- Dizziness/fainting (Signs of Anaphylaxis)

Long-Term Solutions & Lifestyle Tips



Allergen Immunotherapy (Shots/Tablets)

- Long-term treatment to reduce sensitivity.
- Consider if medications are inadequate or cause side effects.



Healthy Habits

- Eat antioxidant-rich foods & fatty fish.
- Stay hydrated.
- Get adequate sleep (7-9 hrs).
- Manage stress.
- Don't smoke.

