



## SPRING ALLERGIES?

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### Fight Back with These Tips

It's spring! And that means lots of pollen is in the air, triggering allergy symptoms in millions of people. This condition is called seasonal allergic rhinitis, commonly referred to as hay fever. Hay fever can lead to sinus infections and can disrupt your sleep and affect your ability to learn at school or be productive at work. Symptoms include:

- Itching in the nose, roof of the mouth, throat and eyes
- Sneezing
- Stuffy nose
- Runny nose
- Tearing eyes
- Dark circles under the eyes

Depending on where you live, there are generally three pollen seasons. The start and end dates of these seasons, as well as the specific plants involved, vary by climate.

- Trees generally pollinate in the spring. Birch, cedar, cottonwood and pine are big allergy triggers.

- Grass releases its pollen in the summer.
- Weeds cause hay fever in the fall. Ragweed is the biggest offender, as it can grow in nearly every environment.

Avoiding your allergy triggers is the best way to reduce symptoms:

- Limit outdoor activities during days with high pollen counts.
- Keep windows closed (at home or in the car) to keep pollen out.
- Shower after coming indoors. Otherwise, pollen in your hair may bother you all night.

— Source: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology



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## Vitamin Update

### VITAMIN C: WHERE SHOULD YOU GET IT?

Fruits and vegetables are the best sources of vitamin C. Other good food sources include red and green peppers, kiwi, broccoli, strawberries, Brussels sprouts and cantaloupe. The vitamin C content of food may be reduced by prolonged storage and by cooking because ascorbic acid (vitamin C) is water soluble and is destroyed by heat. Steaming or microwaving may lessen cooking losses. Fortunately, many of the best food sources of vitamin C, such as fruits and vegetables, are usually consumed raw. Consuming five varied servings of fruits and vegetables a day can provide more than 200 mg of vitamin C.

The Daily Value (DV) for vitamin C is 60 mg for adults and children ages 4 and older, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. If you are not able to get enough vitamin C in your diet, talk with your doctor about whether you should consider a vitamin supplement.

— Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration

## Senior Health Update

### HAVE YOUR DRIVING SKILLS CHANGED?

How do you know if your driving skills have declined? If you answer yes to any of these questions, you may need to look at your driving habits.

- Has a friend or family member expressed concern about your driving?
- Has your doctor advised you to limit driving for health reasons?
- Have you been pulled over by a police officer and warned about poor driving behavior?
- Have you been stopped by the police or had near misses or accidents in the past three years?
- Do you sometimes get lost on familiar routes?
- Do your thoughts wander when you

drive? Do you become confused or angry?

- Do other drivers honk at you frequently?
- Do cars or people walking seem to appear out of nowhere?
- Do you have trouble moving your foot between the gas and brake pedals, or do you confuse the two?

It's important to be aware of your limitations and how they may affect your driving. If you're not sure if you have a driving problem, ask a family member, friend or doctor for advice. The most important thing is to be safe on the road.

— Source: National Institutes of Health



## Is It Strep Throat? ONLY A TEST CAN TELL FOR SURE

Strep throat is an infection most commonly caused by group A Streptococcus bacteria. The bacteria are spread through contact with droplets after an infected person coughs or sneezes. If you touch your mouth, nose or eyes after touching something that has these droplets on it, you may become ill. Strep throat is more common in children and teens than in adults. The most common symptoms include:

- Sore throat that usually starts quickly and can cause severe pain when swallowing
- Fever (101°F or above)
- Red and swollen tonsils, sometimes with white patches or streaks of pus
- Tiny, red spots (petechiae) on the roof of the mouth

- Headache, nausea or vomiting
- Swollen lymph nodes in the front of the neck
- Sandpaper-like rash

Doctors can check for strep with a “quick strep test” by swabbing your throat to see if group A strep bacteria are the cause. Just looking at the throat is not enough to make a diagnosis. If the quick test is positive, the doctor can prescribe antibiotics. If the test is negative, but the doctor still strongly suspects you have strep, she can take a throat-culture swab to test further for the bacteria. Those results will take a little longer. The result of the test will help your doctor determine whether giving antibiotics is appropriate.

— Source: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

## Talk with Your Pharmacist

### MANAGING YOUR MEDICATIONS

As you age, it is important to know about your medicines to avoid possible problems. You may be faced with more health conditions that you need to treat on a regular basis. It is important to be aware that the use of more medications, along with normal body changes caused by aging, can increase the chance of unwanted or maybe even harmful drug interactions.

As you age, body changes can affect the way medicines are absorbed and used. For example, changes in the digestive system can affect how fast medicines enter the bloodstream. Changes in body weight can influence the amount of medicine you need to take and how long it stays in your body. The circulation system may slow down, which can affect how fast drugs get to the liver and kidneys. The liver and kidneys also may work more slowly, affecting the way a drug breaks down and is removed from the body.

The more you know about your medications, the easier it is to avoid these potential problems. Your pharmacist can be a great resource here. Stop by — and bring your questions.

— Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration



### Did You Know?

#### ORAL CARE FOR YOUR BABY

Your baby may not yet have her first tooth, but you can still take care of her gums in preparation for a lifetime of good dental care. Simply wipe your child's gums with a wet washcloth or a clean gauze pad after each feeding. Begin brushing your child's teeth with a little water as soon as the first tooth appears. Supervise tooth brushing to make sure that children older than 2 years use only a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste and avoid swallowing it. Children should be taught to spit out remaining toothpaste and rinse with water after brushing.

— Source: American Dental Association



## April Is Foot Health Awareness Month

### MAKE SURE THOSE NEW SHOES FIT

Wearing comfortable shoes that fit well can prevent many foot problems. Check out these tips:

- Shoe size may change over time, so always have your feet measured before buying shoes. The best time to measure is at the end of the day when your feet are largest.
- Most of us have one foot that is larger than the other. Make sure your shoes fit your larger foot.
- Don't buy shoes without trying them on. Shoe sizes can vary depending on the kind, make and style.
- Walk in the shoes to make sure they feel right. The heel of the shoe should not slide up and down.
- Stand when trying on shoes to make sure there is about 1/2 inch between your toe and the end of the shoe.
- Make sure the ball of your foot fits comfortably into the widest part of the shoe.
- Don't buy shoes that feel too tight with the hope that they will stretch.
- The upper part of the shoes should be made of a soft, flexible material.
- Soles should give solid footing and not slip.
- Low-heeled shoes are more comfortable, safer and less damaging than high-heeled shoes.

— Source: National Institute on Aging



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**Migraines NOT YOUR USUAL HEADACHE**

The pain of a migraine is often described as an intense throbbing pain in one area of the head. Additional symptoms can include nausea and/or vomiting and sensitivity to both light and sound. Migraine is three times more common in women than in men and affects more than 10% of people worldwide.

There is no absolute cure, but there are two ways to approach the treatment of migraines: prevent attacks or relieve symptoms during attacks. Prevention involves the use of medications and behavioral changes. Some drugs originally developed for epilepsy, depression or high blood pressure have been shown to be extremely effective in treating migraines.

Stress-management strategies such as exercise, relaxation techniques, biofeedback and other therapies may reduce the number and

severity of migraine attacks. Making a log of personal migraine triggers can also provide useful information for trigger-avoiding lifestyle changes, including dietary considerations, eating regularly scheduled meals with adequate hydration, stopping certain medications and establishing a consistent sleep schedule. Hormone therapy may help some women whose migraines seem to be linked to their menstrual cycle. A weight-loss program is recommended for obese individuals with migraine. In addition, some medications can be taken after a migraine starts to help reduce symptoms. Talk with your doctor about ways to prevent and treat migraines.

— Source: *National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke*

**Let's Snack!**

**HEALTHY KIDS' TREATS DON'T  
 HAVE TO BE BORING**

Snacking is a major pastime for many kids — and that's not necessarily bad. Nutritious snacking can help your child curb hunger throughout the day, as well as provide energy and important nutrients. Some tips:

- **Keep junk food out of the house.** Your child won't clamor for cookies, candy bars or chips if you don't keep them on hand. Set a good example by choosing healthy snacks yourself.
- **Go for the grain.** Whole-grain foods — such as whole-grain pretzels or tortillas and high-fiber, whole-grain cereals — provide energy with some staying power.
- **Mix and match.** Serve baby carrots or other raw veggies with fat-free ranch dressing or hummus. Dip graham cracker sticks or fresh fruit in fat-free yogurt. Spread peanut butter on celery, apples or bananas.

— Source: *Mayo Clinic*

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