



ALLERGY UPDATE

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Make the Most of Your Visit to an Allergist

Each year, more than 12 million doctor's visits result from allergic rhinitis, commonly known as allergies. Symptoms from seasonal allergies are among the primary reasons people miss school or work.

If allergies are driving you crazy this spring and over-the-counter (OTC) medications aren't providing enough relief, you may be considering seeing an allergist. If you do, be sure to write down questions, concerns and symptoms in advance. Here's a handy checklist:

- Do you have new symptoms? Are your symptoms worsening? Be sure to mention coughing, difficulty breathing or loss of sleep, as these may be signs of asthma.
- Have you missed school or work due to allergy or asthma symptoms? Have you had to visit an emergency room or be hospitalized due to symptoms?

- What medications, if any, are you taking? This includes prescription and OTC medications as well as herbal supplements.
- You may want to ask: What steps can I take to avoid allergens? Am I currently on the best treatment plan? What other treatment options are available?

— Source: American Academy of Allergies, Asthma & Immunology



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Your Child's Eyes *What Is Pink Eye?*

Conjunctivitis is an infection of the eyes commonly known as “pink eye.” It is most often caused by a virus but can also be caused by bacteria. Symptoms include redness, irritation and itchiness. Clear or yellow discharge may make the eyelids stick together, especially in the morning. The eyelids may also swell.

People can get conjunctivitis by coming into contact with the tears or discharge from the eyes of an infected person and then touching their own eyes. Preschoolers and school-age children get it most often because of crowding and lack of hand washing.

Doctors may give an eye medication depending on the cause of the infection. Keeping the eyelid clean and lubricating the eye with drops may decrease discomfort until the infection is gone.

— Source: Maryland Department of Health

Senior Health Update *Vitamin D for Stronger Bones*

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, adults age 50 and older need between 800 and 1,000 IU of vitamin D daily. (Some people need more, so talk with your doctor about the correct amount for you.)

If you aren't getting enough vitamin D from sunlight and food, consider taking a supplement. But, before adding a vitamin D supplement, check to see if any of the other supplements, multivitamins or medications you take contain vitamin D. Many calcium supplements also contain vitamin D.

Vitamin D supplements can be taken with or without food. While your body needs vitamin D to absorb calcium, you do not need to take it at the same time as a calcium supplement. If you need help choosing a vitamin D supplement, ask your doctor or pharmacist to recommend one.

— Source: National Osteoporosis Foundation



Talk to Your Pharmacist — *Reducing Medication Errors*

There are many things you can do to help protect yourself or a loved one from potentially dangerous medication errors:

- Have all prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy. This allows the pharmacist to check for possible drug interactions between a new prescription and something you're already taking.
- Check the label when you get a prescription to verify that you're receiving the proper medication. If the medication looks different than it has in the past, ask the pharmacist if there has been a change.
- When possible, keep all medications in their original containers.
- Know what to do if you miss a dose, and contact your doctor or pharmacist if you have any doubts.
- Read the patient-information sheet that accompanies the medication. If you do not receive one, request it from your pharmacist.
- Remind your doctor and pharmacist if you have any medication or food allergies or if you have a condition that could affect the use of any medication. Also mention if you are taking any dietary supplements or over-the-counter medications.

— Source: *The medical journal U.S. Pharmacist*

Corns and Calluses?

Try These Prevention and Treatment Tips

April is Foot Health Awareness Month, and it's a great time to make sure your feet are in healthy shape for spring and summer. Corns and calluses are thick layers of skin caused by repeated pressure or friction. A corn is thickened skin on the top or side of a toe. A callus is thickened skin on the hands or the soles of the feet. Preventing friction is often the only treatment needed.

To treat corns:

If poor-fitting shoes are causing the corn, change to shoes that fit better. Protect the corn with a doughnut-shaped corn pad while it heals. You can buy these at your pharmacy.

To treat calluses:

Calluses often occur due to excess pressure placed on the skin because of another problem such as bunions or hammertoes. Proper treatment of any underlying condition should prevent calluses from returning. Wearing gloves to protect your hands during activities that cause friction (such as gardening and weight lifting) can help prevent calluses. Lightly exfoliating your feet with a pumice stone weekly can help prevent buildup of heavy calluses.

If an infection or ulcer occurs in an area of a callus or corn, see your doctor.

— Source: *National Institutes of Health*

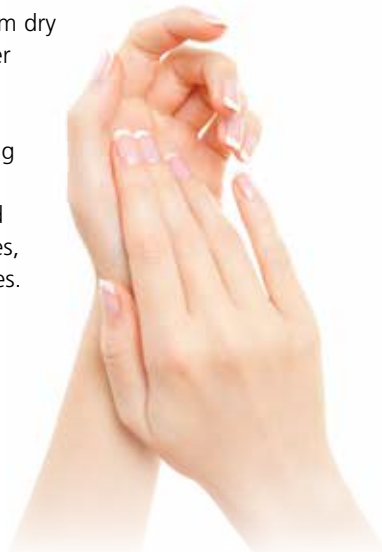


DID YOU KNOW?

Healthier Nails Can Be Yours

To keep your fingernails looking their best, keep them dry and clean. This prevents bacteria from growing under the nails. Repeated or prolonged contact with water can contribute to split fingernails. Wear cotton-lined rubber gloves when washing dishes, cleaning or using harsh chemicals. Trim your nails straight across, then round the tips in a gentle curve. When you use hand lotion, rub the lotion into your fingernails and cuticles, too. Don't bite your fingernails or pick at your cuticles. These habits can damage the nail bed. Even a minor cut alongside your fingernail can allow bacteria or fungi to enter and cause an infection.

— Source: *Mayo Clinic*



“Mommy, My Ear Hurts!” Ear Infections Are the Most Common Cause for Kids’ Doctor Visits

An ear infection is an inflammation of the middle ear, usually caused by bacteria, that occurs when fluid builds up behind the eardrum. Anyone can get an ear infection, but children get them more often than adults. Three out of four children will have at least one ear infection by their third birthday. In fact, ear infections are the most common reason parents bring their child to a doctor. The scientific name for an ear infection is otitis media (OM).

If your child isn't old enough to say “my ear hurts,” here are a few things to look for: Tugging or pulling at the ear(s), fussiness and crying, trouble sleeping, fever, fluid draining from the ear, balance problems, or trouble hearing. Most ear infections are viral and will get better on their own. Your doctor can determine if treatment is needed. Ear pain can be treated with over-the-counter pain relievers or with a warm, dry compress on the ear.

— Source: *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*



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IS IT GERD?

Know the Symptoms — and When to Seek Help

The most common symptom of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is regular heartburn. Other symptoms include bad breath, nausea, pain in the chest or upper abdomen, problems swallowing, respiratory problems, vomiting, and the wearing away of teeth.

When the lower esophageal sphincter becomes weak or relaxes when it shouldn't, stomach contents can rise up into the esophagus. It can become weak or relax due to increased pressure on the abdomen from being pregnant or overweight. It also can weaken due to taking medications such as those used to treat asthma or high blood pressure, antihistamines, painkillers, sedatives, or antidepressants. Smoking or

inhaling secondhand smoke can also contribute. A hiatal hernia can also cause GERD.

See your doctor if you have persistent GERD symptoms that don't get better with over-the-counter medications or a change in diet. Call a doctor right away if you vomit large amounts; have regular projectile, or forceful, vomiting; vomit fluid that is green or yellow, looks like coffee grounds or contains blood; if you have problems breathing after vomiting; if you have pain in the mouth or throat when you eat; or if you have problems swallowing or painful swallowing.

— Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Your Diet How Are Whole Grains Different?

A grain product is any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain. Grains are divided into two subgroups: whole grains and refined grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel — the bran, germ and endosperm. Refined grains have been milled, a process that removes the bran and germ. This is done to give grains a finer texture and improve their shelf life, but it also removes dietary fiber, iron and many B vitamins. Government dietary guidelines advise making half of your grain intake whole grains. For example, choose 100% whole-wheat bread instead of white bread, and brown rice instead of white rice.

— Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

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