Spring Pollen, Allergies and Asthma Update
March 2019

Atlanta Allergy & Asthma said it best, “You know it’s coming – as the season changes and temperatures begin to rise, so will the pollen count!”

With the spring-like temperatures, the increase in the amount of pollen in the air will be apparent across metro Atlanta. In fact, just last week we saw the fifth largest-highest pollen count so far this month, and it is only going to get worse, according to experts at Atlanta Allergy and Asthma. This often occurs in Atlanta and the southeast leading up to Spring because the warmer temps encourage trees like Juniper, Elm, and Birch to release pollens that we normally do not see until the later spring months. Atlanta Allergy officials are saying the pollen count will continue to climb throughout April. It is with this in mind we are sharing the following general information on pollen, allergies and asthma as we have done for the last several years.

General Information on Pollen, Allergies and Asthma:

Pollen counts tend to be highest early in the mornings on warm, dry, breezy days, and lowest during chilly, wet times. The good news is pollen allergies are seasonal which means you will only experience symptoms when those particles are in the air. When suffering from allergic rhinitis/pollen allergies, the body’s natural defense attempts to ‘fight off’ the pollen, in turn causing all of the miserable symptoms many know too well - runny nose, congestion, scratchy throat, and watery eyes. You can check pollen counts daily through your local news stations and/or sign-up to receive daily pollen count information (See information below).

Allowing students to stay indoors when the pollen count is high and/or as indicated by medical experts is an important preventive measure for schools.

Additionally, most allergy sufferers can get relief from allergy symptoms by making the following changes in and around their home and while at school:

- Keep the windows closed and run the air conditioner during allergy season – in your car and house/school
- Stay indoors when pollen counts are high – avoid outdoor activities until early evening because pollen counts tend to be highest in the morning
- Use an air purifier with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter in your home and make sure to change or clear air filters regularly
- Change your clothes and wash your hands after coming from outside on a high-pollen day
- Shower before going to bed or when you get home - pollen can settle into your hair and onto your skin and clothes
- Clean and dust your home regularly and use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter
- If you have outdoor plans, take your allergy medication before going out and do not wait until you have symptoms

According to Atlanta Allergy & Asthma, the five most common mistakes in treating spring allergies include treating symptoms without knowing their specific cause, treating after the symptoms start, spending money on over-the-counter medications with no relief, not avoiding triggers and eating produce that can trigger spring allergy symptoms. Another mistake is not seeing a medical provider.

Seasonal allergies may also trigger asthma and can mimic the common cold. In fact, there are common threads between seasonal allergies and asthma. The symptoms that are produced by allergies can be the same symptoms that are produced by asthma, and asthma can be triggered by pollen. Although there is no real cure for seasonal allergies, it is possible to reduce a child’s symptoms. The best way to do this is to avoid exposure to allergens whenever possible. The following are some additional tips to share with parents of students who have seasonal allergies (especially if they also have asthma):
• See your Healthcare Provider - your doctor may suggest medications (or additional medications) to control your child’s symptoms. Take prescribed and/or over-the-counter medications as indicated.
• If you suspect your child suffers from seasonal allergies, request allergy testing to help identify their specific allergies. See a healthcare provider. There are new treatment options available.
• If your child is allergic to pollen, keep all car and house windows closed and use the air conditioning during pollen season to prevent triggering an asthma attack.
• Be aware of the pollen count for your child’s allergies and take precautions if the counts are high. If your child also has asthma, he/she may need pretreatment before playing outside on high-pollen days. Pollen counts can be found on several of the local news station websites and/or on the following websites: https://www.pollen.com/map/ga or http://www.atlantaallergy.com/

The following are links to Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta website on allergies and asthma: Allergies - https://www.choa.org/medical-services/allergy-and-immunology and Asthma - https://www.choa.org/medical-services/asthma/related-asthma

As mentioned earlier, there are several sources that you can use to check the pollen count and air quality. The following are two of the most common websites to check the pollen count and air quality: http://www.atlantaallergy.com/pollen_counts or https://airgeorgia.org/AtlantaForecast.html

You can also receive automatic updates on Smog Alert information by signing-up on the Mothers & Others for Clean Air website at: http://www.mothersandothersforcleanair.org/ or http://gacommuteoptions.com/Be-the-Solution/Smog-Alerts

We hope this information is helpful but it is not intended to be a substitute for consultation with a healthcare provider.

Thank you,

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