Winter Health Care

Winter Allergies

Allergy, regardless of its season, is what happens to the body when exposed to something it does not like or cannot tolerate.

It is something that affects the body's covering (the skin) and the mucous membrane lining of our respiratory, gastrointestinal, and genitourinary tracts. That adds up to a good bit of the body from head to toe -- skin, ears, eyes, nose, throat, bronchial tubes, stomach, intestine, rectum, bladder, vagina, and urethra.

There are three basic categories of allergy: contact, such as poison ivy; food, such as milk; and inhalation, such as pollens.

The most common of all allergies is the inhalation type, which is experienced as a reaction to materials in the air we breathe. The most common of these includes house dust, pollen, pet dander and mould.

Pollens, of course, are most common in the spring, summer, and fall, and include trees, grasses, and weeds in seasonal order. The usual reaction these agents cause is seasonal hay fever and bronchial asthma.

Inhalant allergies take no time off for seasons, however. In the winter they simply move indoors where they are caused by house dust, pet dander, and moulds that accumulate and concentrate on clothing, furniture, bedding and rugs.



Keep in mind, too, that allergy to contacts can last through the winter when the skin dries out due to the hot, dry air of many homes and because of the need to wear more clothing -- especially those more likely to cause reactions such as wool and synthetics.

When your allergy is bad enough, if you cannot or are not willing to tolerate it, one or more of the following hints will be of help to you:

- Install an air cleaner to take offending particles out of the air.
- A dehumidifier will help to diminish moulds, pet dander, and mites.
- Keep humid areas wiped free with a fungicide to minimise moulds.
- Air condition your home to best control mould and dust mites.
- Isolate pets. Remember that their dander accumulates on rugs, bedding, clothing, and furniture to bother you even though the pet may not be there.
- Seal your bedding in plastic.
- Replace your carpets with throw rugs.
- Use synthetic pillows.
- Corral those dust bunnies where mites love to live.
- Keep your home smoke free (tobacco and wood burning).
- Treat your symptoms with an over-the-counter antihistamine. Be careful of drowsiness as a side effect.
- See your doctor if symptoms include wheezing or shortness of breath, or when you are not sure of the diagnosis. If you find it necessary to repeatedly and continuously take an antihistamine or if hives or skin rash develops, that is a good time to have medical attention also.



Winter Skin Care

Dermatologists' Top Tips For Surviving the Cold

Most people go to great lengths to winterise their house and car, yet they neglect to give the body's largest organ the same tender loving care. Is it any wonder they can't shake that dry, itchy feeling during the winter months?