

By Mark Chung, MD



# Seasonal Allergies

**W**ith the oncoming warm weather, this summer promises to be a highly allergic season, particularly in Huntington Beach, where increased particulate air matter from adjacent industrial areas of Long Beach and South Westerly winds bring all sorts of respiratory irritants that can result in nasal symptoms. Most people know that the nose is the part of the respiratory system with the ability to warm and filter the air we breathe. But did you know that we have antibodies located in the nasal mucosa to ward off bacterial infection and warn us of respiratory allergens? With each breath we take, hundreds of particles are inhaled. Sneezing, nasal congestion and the sensation of "itchiness" are symptoms that result in the dilation of blood vessels with increased activity of the mucous glands, in an effort to rid the body of such irritants. With increased nasal congestion, snoring, coughing, lung congestion may ensue.

It is important to decrease the amount of irritants inhaled. Cleaning our biologic filters with nasal saline once a day may be a good routine to develop to help decrease the dryness of the mucosa and subsequent swelling when the Santa Ana winds blow.

For those who need further medical treatment, there are oral and nasal prescriptions that can help minimize allergic responses. The use of nasal steroids, antihistamines and the drug Singulair has shown beneficial effects. However, these stronger medications, which can be used seasonally, may require the monitoring of long-term side effects. Periodic inspection of the nose by a physician is necessary to ensure that polyps do not develop. When nasal irritation results in bleeding, a review of all medications is a must. The use of a humidifier is rarely necessary in this coastal community, except in very dry weather.

The use of a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter is highly recommended for use in the bedroom, but windows and doors must be closed to allow adequate filtration of ambient air. Don't forget to routinely vacuum and dust your home and if you have pets, keep an eye out for the subtle allergy symptoms in family members, especially the children. **HB**

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