



With Spring in the Air, Asthma and Allergy Season Has Arrived

Asthma and allergies, which often go hand in hand, can become more prevalent in the springtime, but that doesn't mean you have to stay indoors. By monitoring the factors that trigger your allergies, and understanding how to best treat your symptoms, you'll be able to enjoy the fresh air, warmer temperatures, and sunshine of Spring.

Asthma is basically a chronic disease of the lungs, in which a narrowed airway restricts your breathing. On the other hand, allergies, which often cause asthma, are the body's reaction to normally harmless substances in the environment. Both conditions are very common, particularly at this time of year, and both are manageable with the guidance of your physician.

Allergic (extrinsic) asthma, the most common form of asthma, is triggered by an allergic reaction that causes an airway obstruction and inflammation. This form of asthma is partially reversible with medication. Many of the symptoms of both allergic and non-allergic asthma are the same, and they include:

- Frequent coughing
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness

However, allergic asthma is triggered by dust mites, pollen, mold spores, and other allergens, while non-allergic (intrinsic) asthma is triggered by factors not related to allergies, such as anxiety, stress, exercise, air temperature, smoke, viruses or other irritants.

Your doctor can help you develop a strategy to prevent asthma attacks and mitigate the effect of allergies. Pay attention to situations that prompt an attack, such as exposure to allergens, respiratory infections, or other triggers, and avoid these situations whenever possible. Sometimes, you may find that severe or frequent attacks will require a long-term control medication, like an inhaler.

Because inflammation of the lungs and airways plays a critical role in asthma, the most effective medications for long-term control have anti-inflammatory effects. Various forms of anti-inflammatory medication are available and should be discussed with your physician, or possibly an allergist.

With a bit of attention to triggers and environmental surroundings, you can easily manage your breathing and maintain an active, healthy lifestyle, both indoors and outside.



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