

Environmental Control for Allergies: *What Can and Should Be Done*

It has been determined that you are allergic to things in your environment. The most important part of your treatment will be adhering to the medication regimen and/or allergy shots your allergist has recommended. You can also benefit from controlling your exposure to the things you are allergic to.

Pets

All animals produce dander, so there is no such thing as a non-allergenic pet. There is absolutely no relationship between hair length and tendency to cause an allergic reaction. It is the proteins in your pet's saliva, urine and dander that cause allergic reactions...not their hair. The best advice for pet owners who have allergies is to remove the pet from the home. Because this is emotionally hard to do for most people, here are some alternatives that may help reduce exposure:

1. Keep pets outside as much as possible.
2. Keep pets out of the bedroom and off carpets and upholstered furniture.
3. Consider replacing bedding and carpeting once the pets have been removed from the bedroom.
4. Bathe your pet about one time per week; yes, even cats.
5. Dusting and vacuuming "stirs up" dander and should be done by someone non-allergic.
6. Brush the pet outside on a regular basis by someone non-allergic.
7. Minimize the amount of carpeting, drapery, feather bedding, and upholstered furniture in the home. Dander can "stick" to these materials.
8. Encase mattresses to prevent penetration of dander.
9. Consider purchasing a high-efficiency particulate air filter system to remove airborne dander.
10. Place an efficient filter in your furnace to help remove particles from circulating air.
11. Ask your veterinarian about products (i.e.: Allerpet) that may decrease (not eliminate) the amount of dander on your pet.

Dust

The most allergic component of dust is dust mite. These can be found in carpets, bedding, and stuffed animals. Dust mites do not survive well at high altitudes and dry climates, such as Colorado. If you are sensitive to mites and travel to humid parts of the country, it is important to focus on controlling them in the bedroom and other rooms where a lot of time is spent. Here are a few helpful hints:

1. Vacuum carpets, wet mop all hard surface floors, and dust with a damp cloth twice a week.
2. Avoid feather and down bedding. Wash bedding weekly with very hot water to kill mites.
3. If necessary, remove carpeting from the bedroom, or use a low-pile carpet.
4. Eliminate all "dust collectors" in the room, such as books and stuffed animals.
5. Use wipeable window shades or washable curtains on windows rather than blinds or drapes.
6. Cover furnace vents with cheesecloth.

7. Encase the mattress, box spring, and pillows with special covers that prevent mites from escaping.
8. Apply a mite-killing powder (ie: Acarosan powder) to your carpet.

Pollens and Outdoor Molds

These are seasons plants typically pollinate in Colorado:

Trees: February-May

Grasses: May –July

Weeds: July-frost

Frequently, the first hard frost or snow will decrease the amount of pollen in the air. However, if a drying period follows the frost or snow, the pollen that has already been produced may not disintegrate and may remain for many weeks after the plants have died. It is difficult to completely avoid these substances, but here are some suggestions:

1. Try to avoid going outside in the early morning or late evening when pollen counts are high.
2. Do not plant many trees near your home.
3. Keep windows and doors closed as much as possible so pollens and molds can't enter your home.
4. Set your car air conditioner on "re-circulate".
5. If possible, have someone else do the yard work.
6. Avoid piles of dead leaves, where molds grow.
7. Do not hang clothes or bedding outside to dry.

Indoor Molds

Molds flourish in damp, dark areas where ventilation is poor, such as bathrooms, basements, crawl spaces, humidifiers, refrigerators, and old books. Mold growth may be significant if there has been a leak in your home. Here are some ways to decrease mold exposure:

1. Remove carpet and padding from bathrooms and rooms that have become wet from leaks.
2. Avoid crawl spaces.
3. Avoid leaving water in a pan under plants.
4. Keep tiles and grout in bathrooms clean.
5. Keep the humidifier clean and change the water frequently.
6. Make sure your clothes dryer is vented to the outside, and dry your clothes immediately after washing them.
7. Automobile air conditioners should be cleaned professionally on occasion to reduce mold growth.