



Spring/Summer 2011

As spring arrives around the country, many of us welcome the warmer weather as a break from the record cold and storms of this past winter. Along with celebrating the many wonderful things that spring brings, the change in seasons is also a good time to make sure our families are staying as healthy as possible. With that in mind we are presenting the latest edition of our spring newsletter.

In it are timely articles about relieving spring allergies and protecting children from the sun. In addition, we've included articles about two topics that continue to be in the news - preventing cyber bullying and eating not just to stave off obesity, but for overall good health.

We hope you find this information useful and wish you a wonderful spring season!



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1275 SUMMER STREET
SUITE 301
STAMFORD, CT 06905
P: 203-324-4109
F: 203-969-1271

36 OLD KINGS HIGHWAY SOUTH
DARIEN, CT 06820
P: 203-655-3307
F: 203-655-9607

Springtime allergies: Nip them in the bud

Relieve springtime allergies with these tried-and-true techniques.

Spring means flower buds and blooming trees — and if you're one of the millions of people who have springtime allergies, it also means sneezing, congestion, runny nose and other bothersome symptoms. Springtime allergies — also called hay fever and allergic rhinitis — can make you miserable. But before you settle for plastic flowers and artificial turf, try these simple strategies to keep springtime allergies under control.

Reduce your exposure to allergy triggers

There are a number of things that you can do to reduce your exposure to the things that trigger your allergy signs and symptoms (allergens):

- Stay indoors on dry, windy days — the best time to go outside is after a good rain, which helps clear pollen from the air.
- Delegate lawn mowing, weed pulling and other gardening chores that stir up allergens.
- Remove clothes you've worn outside; you may also want to shower to rinse pollen from your skin and hair.
- Don't hang laundry outside — pollen can stick to sheets and towels.
- Wear a dust mask if you do outside chores.

Take extra steps when pollen counts are high

Seasonal allergy signs and symptoms can flare up when there's a lot of pollen in the air. These steps can help you reduce your exposure:

- Check your local TV or radio station, your local newspaper, or the Internet for pollen forecasts and current pollen levels.
- If high pollen counts are forecasted, start taking allergy medications before your symptoms start.
- Close doors and windows at night or any other time when pollen counts are high.
- Avoid outdoor activity in the early morning when pollen counts are highest.

Keep indoor air clean

There's no miracle product that can eliminate all allergens from the air in your home, but these suggestions may help:

- Use the air conditioning in your house and car.
- If you have forced air heating or air conditioning in your house, use high-efficiency filters and follow regular maintenance schedules.
- Keep indoor air dry with a dehumidifier.
- Use a portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter in your bedroom.
- Clean floors often with a vacuum cleaner that has a HEPA filter.



Try an over-the-counter remedy

Several types of nonprescription medications can help ease allergy symptoms. They include:

Oral antihistamines. Antihistamines can help relieve sneezing, itching, runny nose and watery eyes. Examples of oral antihistamines include loratadine (Claritin, others) and cetirizine (Zyrtec, others). Older antihistamines such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl, others) and chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton, others) are also effective, but they can make you drowsy.

Rinse your sinuses

Rinsing your nasal passages with salt water — nasal irrigation — is a quick, inexpensive and effective way to relieve allergy symptoms. Rinsing directly flushes out mucus and irritants from your nose. Look for a squeeze bottle or a neti pot — a small container with a spout designed for nose rinsing — at your pharmacy or health food store.

When home remedies aren't enough, see your doctor

For many people, avoiding allergens and taking over-the-counter medications is enough to ease symptoms. But if your seasonal allergies are still bothersome, don't give up. A number of other treatments are available.

If you have bad seasonal allergies, your doctor may recommend that you have skin tests or blood tests to find out exactly what allergens trigger your symptoms. Testing can help determine what steps you need to take to avoid your specific triggers and identify which treatments are likely to work best for you.

For some people, allergy shots (allergen immunotherapy) can be a good option. Also known as desensitization, this treatment involves regular injections containing tiny amounts of the substances that cause your allergies. Over time, these injections reduce the immune system reaction that causes symptoms.

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Beware of Bullies in the Cyber-Schoolyard



For today's children, bullies don't exist just in the schoolyard. Use of cell phones, social media pages like Facebook and Twitter, instant messenger programs, blogs, chat rooms and other technology can open kids up to attacks from cyberbullies.

Tweens and teens are masters of modern communication, sending messages to friends with the click of a button. Technology, however, can be misused to spread rumors and other hurtful information.

Cyberbullying is defined as deliberately using digital media to communicate false, embarrassing or hostile information about another

person, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Not only is it the most common online risk among teens, one-sixth of 6- to 11-year-olds have reported being cyberbullied, according to a 2006 study.

Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbully victims are harassed at a younger age, and young girls are at greatest risk. Victims also are less likely to know who is bullying them, due to the ease of anonymity in cyberspace.

Children and teens who have been cyberbullied report feelings of depression, anxiety and severe isolation; it has even led to suicide. Cyberbully victims often will avoid attending school or an activity, become upset after computer or cell phone use, or seem unusually sad or withdrawn, according to the AAP book, *CyberSafe: Protecting and Empowering Kids in the Digital World of Texting, Gaming and Social Media*, by Gwenn O'Keeffe, M.D., FAAP.

To avoid having a child become a victim, the AAP offers the following tips for parents:

- match a cell phone's features based on needs and age;
- ensure recommended minimum age requirements are met for using social media sites such as Facebook (age 13 years) and use parental controls; and
- explain that when a child, tween or teen posts comments and photos on the Internet or via cell phone, they may be shared with others without consent.

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Eating for Good Health

With obesity on the rise among our nation's children there is a renewed focus on healthful eating for our families.

Calorie counting and exercising to the point of fatigue are usually not the answer, particularly for children. In fact, restricting calories in a growing child could pose risks to his health. You shouldn't do so unless your pediatrician recommends and supervises those efforts.

So what's the answer? Consistently good nutrition, meal after meal, is a foundation for a healthy childhood. Rather than becoming preoccupied with weightloss goals, you should focus instead on a wholesome lifestyle for everyone in your family, no matter what each member weighs.

Establish some structure to your family's eating—3 well-thought-out meals and 2 snacks a day.

If you take steps to minimize the junk food in your family's diet, eliminate sugared beverages like soft drinks, pay attention to portion sizes, and add some physical activity to the mix, your heavy child will grow up to have a healthy weight.

In preparing foods high in nutritional value, build the family meals around selections like

- **Fresh fruits and vegetables**
- **Whole-grain cereals and bread**
- **Low-fat or nonfat dairy products like milk, yogurt, and cheeses**
- **Lean and skinless meats including chicken, turkey, fish, and lean hamburger**

Portion sizes at this age should be less than that of an adult-sized serving.

Remember that when you're in the kitchen, choose cooking methods that involve a minimal amount of fat, relying primarily on broiling, roasting, and steaming.

There are plenty of obstacles that can trip up your well-intentioned efforts at keeping your family eating right.

In the mornings, as you're rushing to get your child off to school, are there days when he doesn't have the time to sit down for a nourishing breakfast? At school, does he sometimes make poor choices in the cafeteria or from vending machines?

As a parent, part of your responsibility is to find solutions to any stumbling blocks that arise.

Also remember that you're a role model in this process, so make healthy food choices for yourself as well as the rest of the family. Even though school-aged children are busier than ever, make an effort to find time for family meals as often as possible. When all of you sit down at the dining room table together, it's a perfect opportunity for every family member to describe his or her day and the family to grow closer.



MAURA ANGIELLO-SMITH, M.D.
AMY E. CRAM, M.D.
LAMBROS G. GEOTES, M.D.
DEBRA K. GOTZ, M.D.
ANDREW S. HART, M.D.
JENNIFER F. HENKIND, M.D.
HEATHER M. LARSON, M.D.
REBECCA L. LEPAGE, M.D.
JAMIE ROACH MURRAY, M.D.

Protecting Children from the Sun

Just a few serious sunburns can increase your child's risk of skin cancer later in life. Kids don't have to be at the pool, beach, or on vacation to get too much sun. Their skin needs protection from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays whenever they're outdoors.



Tips to protect your child this summer:

SEEK SHADE. UV rays are strongest and most harmful during midday, so it's best to plan indoor activities then. If this is not possible, seek shade under a tree, an umbrella, or a pop-up tent.

COVER UP. Clothing that covers your child's skin helps protect against UV rays. Although a long-sleeved shirt and long pants with a tight weave are best,

they aren't always practical. A T-shirt, long shorts, or a beach cover-up are good choices, too—but it's wise to double up on protection by applying sunscreen or keeping your child in the shade when possible.

GET A HAT. Hats that shade the face, scalp, ears, and neck are easy to use and give great protection. Baseball caps are popular among kids, but they don't protect their ears and neck. If your child chooses a cap, be sure to protect exposed areas with sunscreen.

Wear sunglasses. They protect your child's eyes from UV rays, which can lead to cataracts later in life. Look for sunglasses that wrap around and block as close to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays as possible.

APPLY SUNSCREEN. Use sunscreen with at least SPF 15 and UVA and UVB protection every time your child goes outside. For the best protection, apply sunscreen generously 30 minutes before going outdoors. Don't forget to protect ears, noses, lips, and the tops of feet.

Take sunscreen with you to reapply during the day, especially after your child swims or exercises. This applies to waterproof and water-resistant products as well.

TURNING PINK? Unprotected skin can be damaged by the sun's UV rays in as little as 15 minutes. Yet it can take up to 12 hours for skin to show the full effect of sun exposure. So, if your child's skin looks "a little pink" today, it may be burned tomorrow morning. To prevent further burning, get your child out of the sun.

TAN? There's no other way to say it—tanned skin is damaged skin. Any change in the color of your child's skin after time outside—whether sunburn or suntan—indicates damage from UV rays.

COOL AND CLOUDY? Children still need protection. UV rays, not the temperature, do the damage. Clouds do not block UV rays, they filter them—and sometimes only slightly.

Source: cdc.gov