

# UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

BY JUDITH LYZAK, M.D.

**AAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHCHHOOOOOOOOO!!!!**



It's seasonal allergy time or "hay fever" season! This refers to a group of conditions that can cause sneezing, and a stuffy or runny nose. Symptoms are typically limited to only certain time periods and correlate with either tree, grass or weed pollen, or mold spores which enjoy growing in the humid weather. Most people can breathe in these substances without any problem, but people with seasonal allergies have an immune system that acts as if these substances are harmful, which results in symptoms. This usually starts in childhood and can last a lifetime, but symptoms may wax and wane over time. Seasonal allergies may run in families. The symptoms typically include stuffy nose, runny nose, sneezing, itchy or red eyes, sore throat, itching throat or ears, and waking up at night or difficulty sleeping. How does the physician test for seasonal allergies? Two options include a skin test, performed in the physician's office where the possible allergen is injected intradermally to see if the skin reacts (becomes red and swollen) or a blood test, such as the allergen blood test we perform here at Alverno, which tests for an IgE mediated allergic response to specific allergens such as those described above.

Irrespective of the cause, symptoms are typically treated the same, with nose rinses such as salt water, steroid nasal sprays, antihistamines, decongestants, allergy shots or allergy pills. Not all methods work for every patient, so collaborating with your doctor to determine what best works for you is ideal. Some of the decongestants when used for > 3days at a time, can even make your symptoms worse (rebound effect) and unfortunately, the allergy shots may take months to be effective.

The good news is that if anticipated, starting allergy medication 2 weeks or so before the offending antigen starts circulating/pollinating can help ward off symptoms. Alternatively, avoidance of the antigen can be very helpful as well. Staying inside during the time of year when symptoms are at their worst, wearing a dust mask if you have to be outside, keeping car and house windows closed and using air conditioning and lastly showering

before bed to reduce the pollen load in the hair and skin all can help reduce symptoms.

Gesundheit!!!

Respectfully submitted, Dr. Lyzak

