

Seasonal and Perennial Allergies

Allergies, or “hay fever”, affect about 1 in 5 people in the United States. The symptoms are similar to a cold, and include: runny nose; itchy, watery eyes; itching of the nose and roof of mouth; sneezing; stuffy nose; fullness and popping of the ears; dark circles under the eyes; and hives. Allergies may be seasonal, occurring more often at a particular time of year (triggered by tree pollen, grasses or weeds) or perennial, occurring most of the time (triggered by dust mites, cockroaches, mold or pet dander).

The symptoms of allergies are very similar to those of the common cold. Ask yourself the questions in the table below to help determine the cause of your symptoms:

Question	Cold	Allergies
How did my symptoms start?	Symptoms often appear one at a time, beginning with sneezing, then runny nose, then nasal stuffiness	Symptoms appear all at once
How long have my symptoms lasted?	Symptoms generally persist for 7 to 10 days	Symptoms last as long as you are exposed to an allergen
What is the appearance of my nasal discharge?	Often yellowish due to infection	Usually clear, thin, or watery
Am I sneezing?	Less common	More common than with colds, especially if you are sneezing several times in a row
What time of year is it?	More common during Winter months	More common Spring-Fall, when plants are pollinating
Do I have a fever?	May be accompanied by a fever	Not generally associated with fever

Allergy symptoms can range from mild to severe, and can significantly affect your quality of life. One of the most important things you can do to improve symptoms is to avoid things that worsen them:

- √ Shower or bathe before bed to remove pollen and other allergens from skin and hair.
- √ Reduce the amount of mold in your home by removing houseplants and cleaning damp areas frequently.
- √ If you have a pet, the use of allergen-resistant bedding, bathing your pet frequently, and using an air filter may help reduce pet dander in your home.
- √ To reduce dust mites, replace carpets with wood or linoleum and clean the floors often, use a vacuum with a high-efficiency particulate or electronic filter, and cover mattresses and pillows with plastic covers.

If your allergy symptoms are mild, over-the-counter medications may be enough to control them. If your symptoms are more severe, or if you have symptoms year-round, see your doctor. He or she may recommend that you see an allergy specialist, and may prescribe a prescription medication to treat your symptoms. Medications used to help control allergy symptoms include:

- **Antihistamines** – relieve itchiness, sneezing and runny nose
- **Decongestants** – relieve stuffy nose
- **Cromolyn or steroid nasal sprays** – decrease the reaction of nasal tissues to allergens
- **Eye drops** – control eye symptoms
- **Leukotriene modifiers** – decrease the body’s reaction to allergens
- **Allergy shots** – small amounts of allergens, given on a regular schedule, to help your body get used to the allergens

May is Mental Health Month

May is National Mental Health Month, and we have set aside part of this quarter's newsletter to raise awareness of two of the most common mental illnesses. Approximately 40 million Americans suffer from an anxiety disorder and more than 19 million Americans suffer with depressive illness each year. These conditions are often debilitating and can have a significant impact on productivity in the workplace, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life.

Symptoms of anxiety disorders may include the following:

- Feeling keyed up or on edge
- Feeling a lump in the throat
- Trouble concentrating
- Fatigue
- Feeling irritable
- Impatience
- Being easily distracted
- Headache, stomachache or muscle tension
- Difficulty sleeping
- Excessive sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Diarrhea
- Phobias, obsessions or panic attacks

Symptoms of depression may include:

- Persistent sad, anxious or empty mood
- Feeling hopeless or helpless
- Feeling guilty or worthless
- Loss of interest or pleasure in things that were once enjoyed
- Decreased energy or fatigue
- Trouble concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Sleep difficulties
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Restlessness or irritability
- Persistent headaches, digestive disorders or chronic pain

The symptoms of anxiety and depression often overlap and a person can suffer from both anxiety and depression at the same time. The good news is that these conditions can be treated. If you notice any of the above symptoms, discuss them with your physician. You may also visit www.freedomfromfear.org or call 1-888-442-2022 to get facts about depression and anxiety, and take a free screening test.

Summer Sun Safety

Summer is approaching quickly, and the hot summer months pose special hazards, such as heat and sun exposure, especially to those spending a lot of time outdoors. Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) radiation that can cause skin damage (premature aging, wrinkles), cataracts and skin cancer. The amount of skin damage that occurs depends on the strength of the sunlight, the length of time the skin is exposed to the sunlight and whether or not the skin is protected. There are no safe amounts of UV radiation and no safe suntans. If you plan to be outdoors for extended periods, it is important to protect yourself from the sun:

- ✦ Cover exposed areas of skin with loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and long pants

- ✦ Use a sunscreen of at least an SPF of 30, and reapply as directed on the container
- ✦ Limit your sun exposure between the hours of 10am to 4pm, if possible, when the UV rays are most intense
- ✦ Wear a wide-brimmed hat that protects the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose and scalp
- ✦ Wear UV-absorbent sunglasses that block 99 to 100% of UVA and UVB rays (check the product label before purchasing)





Despite your best efforts to protect yourself, sunburn may still result if you are outdoors for prolonged periods. While most cases of sunburn are mild, some can be severe and damaging to your skin. Sunburn can be very painful, and make your skin appear red and feel hot. If you experience a fever, blisters, or

extremely severe pain with sunburn, seek medical attention. Some tips to remember when treating sunburn:

- ✦ Apply a moisturizing lotion, or aloe
- ✦ Do not apply salve, butter, or ointment
- ✦ Try to avoid sun exposure

- ✦ Apply cold compresses or submerge the affected area in cool water
- ✦ Do not pick at or break blisters

Since sun exposure at any age can lead to skin cancer, it is especially important for people who are frequently outdoors to examine their bodies monthly for any signs of skin cancer.

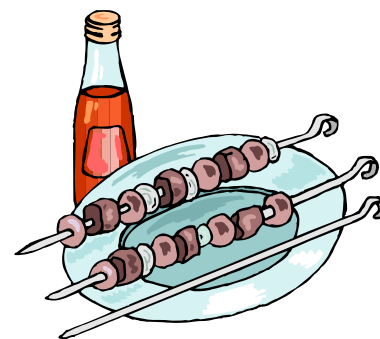
Skin cancers that are detected early can almost always be successfully treated and cured. When examining your skin, look for the following warning signs, and seek medical attention if you notice:

- ◆ A spot on the skin that is changing in size, shape or color over a period of 1 month to 1-2 years
- ◆ Pale, waxy-appearing, pearly nodules
- ◆ Red, scaly or sharply outlined patches
- ◆ Sores on the skin that don't heal completely
- ◆ Small, mole-like growths

RECIPE CORNER

Chicken Kabobs

18 oz Can pineapple chunks	1 tsp Cilantro
1 tsp Cumin	10 oz Boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 tsp Coriander	1 Red bell pepper
1/8 tsp Garlic powder	1 Onion
1 Tbsp Chili powder	8 Cherry tomatoes
2 Tbsp Plain yogurt	



In a large bowl, mix together spices and yogurt. Add juice from pineapple and stir. Cut the chicken into cubes and add to mixture. Cover and refrigerate for 1 to 1.5 hours. Cut pepper and onion into cubes. Arrange chicken, pineapple and vegetables on skewers. Grill over medium heat for about 10 minutes, turning frequently and basting with remaining marinade.

Yield: 4 servings

Each serving provides:

Calories 200	Saturated Fat 1 gram	Carbohydrates 19 grams
Calories from Fat 31	Cholesterol 61mg	Dietary Fiber 2.4 grams
Total Fat 3 grams	Sodium 62 mg	Protein 24 grams

Adapted from: www.lowsodiumcooking.com/free/ChickenKabobs.htm

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