

CHILDREN – ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES

It's the beginning of the spring allergy season. We can expect high levels of tree pollen from March through May and grass pollens from May through June. Allergies can cause itchy eyes, nose and throat, runny nose, sneezing, skin rashes and even worsening of your child's asthma.

You can't control pollen—pollen grains can blow hundreds of miles—but you can control your children's exposure to allergens. Showering after playing outdoors gets the pollen off their skin and hair. Make sure they put those outdoor clothes in a hamper or laundry bag--throwing clothes on the bed or floor just transfers the pollen to a new location! Wash the bedding frequently and if possible, use an air conditioner to help filter out pollen.

As with most things, when it comes to allergies, knowledge is power. The more you know about your child's allergies, the more choices you have for treatment. That can mean more comfort with less medication. A good start is a consultation with an Allergist.

An Allergist is a medical doctor who specializes in allergies, asthma, and conditions of the immune system. A visit to the Allergist will start with a medical history focusing on your child's symptoms, which may include sneezing, itching, skin rashes, or red eyes. The doctor will want to know the severity, frequency, triggers and timing of the symptoms. He or she will ask about any treatments you've tried, any other medical issues your child may have and whether any family members have allergies. An Environmental History focuses on what surrounds your child, such as smoke, dust, or animals. This helps with diagnosis and treatment. A physical examination may reveal nasal congestion, wheezing or skin changes. There are even certain behaviors that

go along with allergy, such as sniffing, snorting, or throat clearing.

Allergy testing (which can be done by skin testing or an ordinary blood test), can determine what is causing your child's allergies. Finally, the Allergist will work with you to come up with a treatment plan that will fit your child's symptoms and lifestyle.

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