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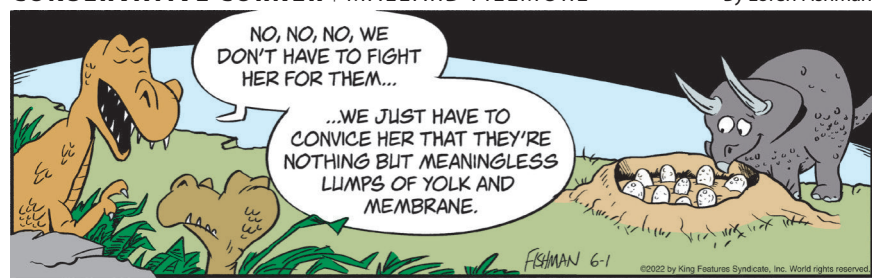
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By Loren Fishman



SUNDAY, LOCAL COMMENTARY | MONDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY & FRIDAY, POLITICAL OPINION | WEDNESDAY, HEALTH & WELLNESS ADVICE | SATURDAY, POSITIVE LIVING

A VIEW FROM THE VILLAGES HEALTH

Are you one of the 67 million Americans suffering from seasonal allergies? There are things we can do to treat and even prevent seasonal allergy symptoms.



Kenechi Anuligo

COMMENTARY

Seasonal allergies, also known as “hay fever,” like other forms of allergies, develop when the body’s immune system overreacts to pollen in the environment, usually during spring, summer, or fall when certain plants pollinate.

Pollen is an airborne allergen that can affect our health. Pollen grains are tiny “seeds” dispersed from flowering plants, trees, grass, and weeds. The amount and type of pollen in the air depends on the season and geographic region. Although pollen counts are typically higher during the warmer seasons, some plants pollinate year-round. Many people first get seasonal

allergies when they are young, but seasonal allergies can begin at any age and can get better or worse over time.

When allergy symptoms only occur at certain times of the year, they are called seasonal allergies. These are usually caused by pollens from trees, grasses, or weeds.

They may also be caused by mold spores, which grow when the weather is humid, wet, or damp. Some people have year-round allergy symptoms. These are usually caused by insects, such as dust mites and cockroaches, animals such as cats and dogs, or mold spores.

Symptoms of seasonal allergies include:

- » sneezing
- » wheezing
- » nasal congestion
- » coughing
- » itchy, watery eyes
- » runny nose
- » itchy throat
- » stomachache
- » itchy skin
- » hives

- » fatigue
- » irritability

People with seasonal allergies might use one or more of the following treatments to help reduce their symptoms:

Nose rinses: Rinsing out the nose with salt water cleans the inside of the nose and gets rid of pollen in the nose. Different devices can be used to rinse the nose.

Steroid nose sprays: These are recommended first, because they are the best treatment for stuffy nose. Many of these sprays are available without a prescription. Steroid nose sprays work best if you use them every day, and it can take a few days for them to work fully.

Steroid nose sprays are more effective than other allergy medicines for stuffy nose and post-nasal drip (which is when mucus runs down the back of your throat).

Antihistamines: These medicines help stop itching, sneezing, and runny nose symptoms. They don’t treat stuffy nose as well as steroid nose sprays. Some antihistamines can make people feel tired.

Antihistamine eye drops: These medicines are available

without a prescription. They can help with eyes that feel itchy or gritty.

Decongestants: These medicines can reduce stuffy nose symptoms. People with certain health problems, such as high blood pressure, should not take decongestants.

Also, people should not use decongestant nose sprays for more than 3 days in a row. Using these nose sprays for more than 3 days in a row can make symptoms worse.

Allergy shots: Some people with seasonal allergies choose to get allergy shots. Usually, allergy shots are given every week or month by an allergy doctor. They contain tiny amounts of allergens, such as pollen. Many people find that this treatment reduces their symptoms, but it can take months to work.

Allergy pills (under the tongue): For some types of pollen allergies, there are pills that work much like allergy shots.

These pills need to be prescribed by a doctor. They are made to dissolve under the tongue. They are taken every day for several months of the year.

Other steps you can take to prevent seasonal allergies include:

» Don’t touch your eyes while you are outside and wash your hands when you go back inside (before you touch your eyes).

» Shower after being outside to remove pollen from your skin and hair.

» Change your clothes after being outdoors.

» Keep windows closed during pollen season.

» Use high-efficiency filters in your home’s heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system. Make sure your HVAC can use high-efficiency filters and that they don’t violate the system’s warranty.

See your favorite The Villages Health primary care provider to discuss the seasonal allergy treatment strategies that may work best for you.

For more information, contact us at 844-TVH-WELL or 844-884-9355 or visit us online to schedule an appointment at Request a New Patient Appointment - The Villages Health.

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