

Did you know that more than 60 million Americans suffer from asthma or allergies? Approximately 10 million of those sufferers have to put up with both conditions. While there are no cures, both conditions can be managed with prevention and treatment. Spring is a particularly difficult season for asthma and allergy sufferers. That's why now is a great time to learn more about asthma and allergies and what you can do to manage them.

Asthma Basics

Asthma is a chronic lung disease, estimated to affect more than 20 million Americans. The disease causes the main airways of your lungs to become inflamed and swollen. As a result, the airways become very sensitive and strongly react to common allergens and irritants such as pollen, dust mites, molds, animal dander, smoke and cold air. Other health conditions such as obesity, sleep apnea, stress and anxiety, acid reflux and even the common cold can trigger or make asthma symptoms worse.

Are You at Risk for Asthma?

The exact cause of asthma is unknown; however, if someone in your family has asthma, then you have a greater chance of having it. Childhood asthma occurs more frequently in boys than girls. While adult asthma (after age 40) occurs more often in women than men.

Taking Control of Asthma

When managing your asthma, the goal is to feel good, be active all day and sleep well at night. Here are some suggestions on how you can take action to do just that:

- Closely monitor your asthma symptoms
- Communicate regularly with your doctor
- Avoid asthma triggers
- Take asthma medication as prescribed



Allergies

Approximately 50 million people suffer from allergies. An allergic reaction occurs when the immune system overreacts to a foreign substance (an allergen) that is touched, inhaled, eaten or injected. This can result in a wide range of symptoms:

- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Itchy eyes
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Rashes
- Hives
- Low blood pressure
- Asthma attacks
- Trouble breathing
- And even death

Are You at Risk?

Allergies can develop in any person, at any age. Genetics and environment are the most common risk factors for developing allergies. So if your parents have allergies, there is a much greater chance that you will. Frequent exposure to allergens earlier in life increases the risk as well.

Take Control of Your Allergies

Managing allergies can be tricky. The best method for preventing a reaction is to avoid your allergy triggers. With some allergies, such as pollen, insects and other outdoor allergens, it is not always possible to avoid them. In those cases, taking allergy medications can help lessen the allergic reaction and relieve symptoms. For individuals with more severe allergies, immunotherapy may be necessary. This involves a series of injections to help build up the immune system's response. Speak with your doctor to determine what treatment is best for you.

