Health Tips

Allergy Season:

The weather is clearing, the temperature rising, and flowers are blooming. The NAU Campus Health Center is seeing a lot of nasal allergies, also called “Allergic Rhinitis.” This occurs after exposure to pollen, molds, mildew, animal “dander,” dust, smoke and fumes. (These are called “allergens”). When these particles contact the lining of the nose, eyes, eyelids, sinuses or throat, they cause the cells to release a chemical called “histamine”. Histamine may cause a watery discharge from the eyes or nose. It may also cause violent sneezing, nasal congestion, itching of the eyes, nose, throat and mouth.

Nasal allergies cannot be cured but symptoms can be reduced. Avoid or reduce exposure to the allergen when possible, by the following measures:

POLLEN
-- Stay indoors on hot windy days during pollen season and keep windows and doors closed.

DUST, MOLD & MILDEW
-- When cleaning don’t stir up dust, once a week clean the walls and floors with a damp mop, also discard old moldy books, furniture and bedding and use synthetic fabrics for furniture, curtains and bedding.

ANIMAL DANDER
-- Remove all indoor pets, avoid all contact with furry animals, vacuum often, avoid down stuff pillows and coats.

HOME CARE:
1) DECONGESTANT pills and sprays (Sudafed, NeoSyneprhine, Afrin), reduce tissue swelling and watery discharge. Note: Afrin should not be used for more than 3 days.

2) ANTIHISTAMINES block the release of histamine during the allergic response. Antihistamines are more effective when taken BEFORE symptoms develop. Unless a prescription antihistamine was prescribed, you may take CLARITIN (loratadine), ZYRTEC (cetirizine), ALLEGRA (fexofenadine) or BENADRYL (diphenhydramine). Take care when driving or performing other activities when taking Benadryl as it may make you drowsy.

3) STEROID nasal sprays help to reduce the local inflammation which adds to the allergic response. Triamcinolone (Nasacort) and fluticasone (Flonase) are now available over the counter, without a prescription. Other corticosteroid nasal sprays include beclomethasone (Qnasl, Beconase, Vancenase), budesonide (Rhinocort), flunisolide (Nasalide, Nasarel), mometasone (Nasonex), ciclesonide (Omnaris, Zetonna), fluticasone furoate (Veramyst) and oral steroids (Prednisone) may be prescribed for more severe symptoms.

4) If you have ASTHMA, pollen season may make your asthma symptoms worse. It is important that you use your asthma medicines as directed during this time to prevent or treat attacks. Some persons with asthma have a worsening of their asthma symptoms when taking antihistamines. If you notice this, stop the antihistamines and notify your doctor.