



Asthma and Allergy Fast Facts

Asthma is the most common chronic disorder in childhood, currently affecting an estimated 6.2 million children under 18 years; of which 4 million suffered from an asthma attack or episode in 2004. An asthma episode is a series of events that results in narrowed airways. These include: swelling of the lining, tightening of the muscle, and increased secretion of mucus in the airway.

WHAT IS HAY FEVER?

Hay fever is the name given to pollen allergy. An estimated 26.1 million Americans have hay fever symptoms each year. 14.6 million Americans have asthma, which can often accompany hay fever.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS FOR HAY FEVER?

Sneezing that is repeated and prolonged is the most common mark of the hay fever sufferer. A stuffy and watery nose is also a main sign. Other symptoms include redness, swelling and itching of the eyes; itching of the nose, throat and mouth and itching of the ears, or other ear problems. These symptoms differ in degree according to the individual.

Health complications from repeated hay fever attacks, year after year, may be an even more serious problem. Chronic sinusitis is one of these problems. In addition, a significant percentage of people with hay fever have or develop asthma.

HOW TO CONTROL HAY FEVER

Avoiding the substance that causes a reaction is the best way to control hay fever. Using air conditioning and air purifying devices may help cut down on suffering during the hay fever season. Dust masks should be used during outdoor work if the work cannot be avoided.

Antihistamines - drugs that counteract the histamine released by the allergen-antibody reaction - usually serve to give relief from some symptoms. Decongestants may help, as well. However, they don't affect the underlying sensitivity. Over-the-counter nose sprays are usually of limited value and their prolonged use may actually cause symptoms or make them worse. Inhaled steroids are often effective and may be prescribed by a doctor. Specific desensitizing injections are a commonly used treatment.