

THE ALLERGY & ASTHMA CLINIC

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NEWSLETTER

December 2010

Selected Highlights From the Annual Meeting of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI)

Dr. Engler attended the 2010 ACAAI meeting which was held in Phoenix last month. He came back with a number of scientific updates, some of which we'd like to share with you in this month's newsletter:

New Data Raises Questions On the Best Treatment to Help Prevent Food Allergy

The incidence of food allergy is rising and until recently, it was thought that children of allergic parents should avoid eating highly allergenic foods, such as peanuts or eggs, for the first few years of life so as to help reduce the chance of the child developing allergies. However, new evidence shows that after the first 4-6 months of age, these dietary restrictions may not give any significant benefit and the new guidelines suggest that:

- 1) The child should be breast-fed for at least 4-6 months
- 2) After this time, supplemental feeding should occur, without restriction with regard to foods commonly associated with allergy, when the child is hungry, taking care to ensure that the child maintains a healthy diet.
- 3) Of course, if the child develops symptoms suggestive of a food allergy such as eczema, hives or any more serious reactions such as difficulty breathing, a proper allergy evaluation should be undertaken.

These new guidelines greatly reduce the fear and inconvenience many parents experience when deciding what they should feed their babies.

In addition, at the ACAAI meeting, data was presented about other exciting treatments for helping to reduce food allergies, including allergy desensitization with sublingual and oral immunotherapy and traditional Chinese medicines, all of which are felt to offer great promise in the very near future. Several major studies, one on desensitization for peanut allergy and another for egg allergy, are currently in process, and the initial results look very promising. So far, the preliminary results show that patients are able to tolerate exposure

to some of the foods to which they are allergic while they remain on active treatment, but it is unknown if or how long these beneficial results will last when the treatment is stopped.

Although, for right now, avoidance of known food allergens remains the recommended treatment, it looks like we will have very good options to offer our patients with food allergies within the next few years. In the meantime, if you or a loved one are concerned about food allergy, please contact our office so we can do our best to make the proper diagnoses, answer your questions and let you know the best way to deal with your concerns.

New Data Shows that Sublingual Immunotherapy is Very Effective at Both Reducing Allergy Symptoms and Reducing the Risk of Developing Asthma and New Allergies

Dr. Walter Canonica, immediate past President of the World Allergy Organization, gave 2 excellent presentations reviewing the marked success patients on sublingual immunotherapy have had in achieving a marked decrease in seasonal and year-round allergy symptoms along with a corresponding decrease in their need for supplemental medication. He also presented data from a scientific article, soon to be published in which patients with allergies were treated and followed for 15 years, showing that the benefits of this treatment last for many years after a successful course of sublingual immunotherapy. Patients treated with immunotherapy were much less likely to develop asthma and were also much less likely to develop new allergies than their counterparts who were treated with medications alone.

In addition, Dr. Canonica pointed out that in contrast to inhaled steroids, which are the mainstay for asthma treatment and very effective for most patients when used correctly, but which give no lasting benefit when they are stopped, immunotherapy gives continuing benefit to many patients which persists for many years after the treatment course has been completed. Given the concerns many patients and their parents have about the high cost of prescription medications, as well as possible side effects, immunotherapy continues to be an excellent, cost-effective treatment option for many allergic patients, especially children.

Immunotherapy treats the underlying allergy, helps to halt disease progression and is the only treatment for allergies and asthma currently available which is disease modifying.

Updates on Proper Asthma Monitoring and the Importance of Recognizing Exercise Induced Bronchospasm (EIB).

A number of lectures focused on the importance of choosing the right medication for optimizing asthma control while minimizing the risk of side effects from medication. As stated above, proper use of immunotherapy, either injection or sublingual, helps reduce the need for asthma medications. In addition, monitoring bronchial airway inflammation by determining exhaled nitric oxide levels (eNO) allows most patients to maintain stable control of their lung function on lower doses of steroid based medications. It was also pointed out that many allergic patients are experiencing a decreased ability to exercise which they mistakenly attribute to "being out of shape" when they are really experiencing a mild form of asthma called "exercise induced bronchospasm (EIB)". The ironic thing about this condition is that for most patients, EIB, when properly diagnosed, is easily treated with a short acting inhaler such as albuterol. This treatment allows better athletic performance which leads to improved lung function which in turn frequently improves asthma. If you seem to be in less good shape than you think you should be and get easily winded when you try to work out, please contact our office so we can schedule a medical evaluation and lung function test to determine if EIB is what has been slowing you down.

Holiday Schedule and Hours

Our convenient holiday hours are as follows:

Thursday:	December 23	9:00-7:00
Friday:	December 24	Closed
Saturday:	December 25	Closed
Monday:	December 27	9:00-7:00
Friday:	December 31	9:00-1:00
Saturday:	January 1	Closed
Monday:	January 3	9:00-7:00

Happy Holidays to all of you from Dr. Engler and The Allergy & Asthma Clinic Staff. We are thankful and honored that you choose our team to provide for your allergy and asthma needs throughout the year. Best wishes for a Happy, Healthy New Year!