

The Allergy & Asthma Clinic

www.TheAllergyClinic.com

Andrew C. Engler, M.D.

290 Baldwin Avenue, San Mateo, California 94401

(650) 343-4597 FAX (650) 343-3402

Newsletter

www.theallergyclinic.com February 2021

By now, some members of our community have been fortunate to have received one of the COVID vaccinations made available for the general public. While this development is cause for hope and optimism, we need to continue to practice vigilance during this time—including continuing to wear masks and following the CDC guidelines to stay safe.



Pollen Counts Are On the Rise

In the United States alone, more than 50 million Americans suffer from allergies and allergic conditions rank 6th among the leading chronic diseases in the United States. It is estimated that the annual cost of allergies to the health care system and businesses is about \$18 billion dollars. This cost, including the loss of productivity, puts a severe strain not only on our work force, but also our entire health care system.

Here in California, we are blessed with great weather, allowing us to spend quite a bit of time outdoors, whether it be having a picnic, taking a hike or working on the yard. Because pollen can blow for miles, especially during the months of February through June/July, it is important to take steps to minimize the effects pollen may have on your health. After spending time outside, make it a habit to keep pollen-laden clothes and shoes out of the bedroom. It is also a good idea to shower and rinse pollen out of your hair, before you got to bed at night.

Keeping windows open allows us to get fresh air in the house, but doing so may also bring more pollen into the home. It is best not to open windows in the home, especially in the

bedroom, when pollen counts are at their highest or when it is windy. Make a habit of checking your local pollen counts and if the counts are high, try to limit your time outside.

How to Address Pollen Allergies

1. **Identify potential allergens via skin testing and avoid the allergen as much as possible, especially when you are sleeping, by allergy proofing your bedroom.**
2. **Take appropriate medications to help block allergic symptoms**
3. **Treat the underlying allergies with immunotherapy so you can become less allergic.**

Because avoidance measures and taking medications, albeit effective for some, do not “treat” the underlying allergy, for many, immunotherapy is often the treatment of choice. By slowly introducing the patient’s immune system to small, controlled amounts of specific allergens they are allergic to, we can build up the patient’s immunity so that pollen causes less severe allergies in the future. When an adequate level of immunity has been achieved, the substance will be less aggravating to the immune system and thus exposure in the future will cause much fewer symptoms. Immunotherapy or allergy shots/drops, treats the cause of the underlying allergies and provides longer, lasting relief which can persist for years after the course of treatment has been completed.

There are two phases in immunotherapy, the Build-Up Phase and the Maintenance Phase. During the Build-Up Phase for allergy injections, most patients receive increasing amounts of the allergens 1-2 times a week and usually, patients reach their maintenance dose in less than a year. Once their maintenance dose is reached, most patients can stretch out the interval between immunotherapy injections, initially to every 2 weeks, then to every 3-4 weeks. Patients are usually on immunotherapy for about 5 years, but at this point, they are getting their allergy shots every 3-4 weeks. Our medical staff will follow your progress on immunotherapy and during the course of treatment, we will monitor your allergic status and together with your provider, decide on what changes, if any, should be made to your immunotherapy treatment regimen.

Together, we can get your pollen allergies under optimum control. We are here to help!

Please note: In observance of Presidents Day, we will be closed on Monday, February 15, 2021