



Understanding Allergies

The Basic Facts on Allergies:

Allergies can bring about sneezing, congestion, watery eyes, wheezing and other tell-tale symptoms. If your physician has diagnosed you with allergies, you may be wondering what causes them or what the best steps are to decrease symptoms? Learning about allergies will help you understand the steps to take as you follow your physician's advice for treatment. To get you started, here are some allergy basics:

Allergens

People with allergies react to substances called allergens. Allergens are harmless to most people. But when you have allergies, your body finds these substances to be dangerous and reacts by producing antibodies against them. People vary in their degree of sensitivity to allergens, the types of symptoms they experience and the severity of their allergic reactions, but controlling your home environment is a great step in finding relief.

Indoor Allergens

The three primary indoor allergens are dust mite allergens, mold spores and pet dander.

Allergic Threshold

Your allergic threshold determines how sensitive you are to an allergen. If you are very sensitive and it doesn't take much exposure to cause an allergic reaction, you have a low allergic threshold.

Allergen Load

The total exposure at any given time to the various allergens that you are sensitive to.

Allergen Avoidance

Allergen avoidance steps are actions taken around the home to reduce your exposure to allergens. These steps involve cleaning and containing allergens to minimize your exposure.

Allergy Relief: A Simple Analogy

Picture a glass, which represents your allergic threshold. A small glass (low threshold) overflows easily when too much liquid is added. But, a larger glass (high threshold) can tolerate greater amounts of liquid before it overflows.

The liquids filling the glass are allergens and there may be one or several types that cause the overflow. Contact with too many allergens, or ones that you're particularly sensitive to, will cause the glass to overflow.

The glass overflowing is your allergic reaction. Allergy relief is found by minimizing the amount of exposure to the types of allergens that cause your glass to overflow. If you take simple allergen avoidance steps around the home, you can help reduce your allergen load by keeping exposure to various allergens to a minimum, which will go a long way toward achieving allergy relief and a healthier lifestyle.

Reducing your overall exposure doesn't have to be an all or nothing project. As long as you keep your exposure below your allergic threshold, you can prevent allergy symptoms from flaring up.