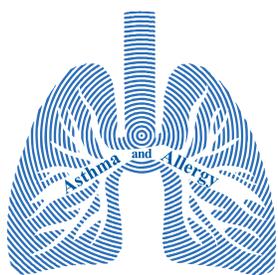


Serving West Virginia Since 1979



Spring 2016

Asthma & Allergy News



### Our Providers

Chandra M Kumar, MD  
Chang Choi MD  
Siwat Kiratiseavee, MD  
Melissa Gamponia MD  
Tarun Kumar MD  
Jenny Guervich PA-C  
Jason Trusty PA-C  
Krystal Smithers PA-C  
Shane Wriston PA-C  
Leann McKay PA-C  
Jessica Dearman PA-C

### We want to hear from you!

Help us serve you and all our patients better.  
Send your suggestions, questions or comments to [drkumar@wvaac.com](mailto:drkumar@wvaac.com)

### Important Links

[Our Website](#)  
[Our Locations](#)  
[Our Providers](#)

Welcome to the latest issue of Asthma and Allergy News from your Allergy Consultants at the Asthma and Allergy Center. This winter saw us stuck inside for days on end, but now, after the severe winds, rain and snow, there is plenty to do outside. Before we start our outdoor activities, though, we need to get ourselves and our families ready with the right tools and the right plan to take on our allergies and asthma exacerbations that sometimes come with the season.

Here at the Asthma and Allergy Center, we want to provide the tools you need to keep you and your family healthy through spring and beyond. If you or a member of your family have questions or concerns about asthma, allergies or their treatment, please feel free to contact us at **304-343-4300**. We are here to serve you.

### Springtime Allergy News

Spring is such a beautiful season, but all the beauty also brings misery for people who suffer from tree pollen allergies. Allergy symptoms arise from the body's reaction to contact with an allergen like pollen.

Tree Pollen is the main springtime allergy trigger. For flowering trees the pollen is carried from male flowers to the female flowers by insects, the non flowering trees rely on the wind to do the same job for them. Being an obviously inefficient process, they have to release tons and tons of pollen in the air to ensure success Further the pollen has to be extremely light so it can be carried on the wind for miles from its point of origin. When people with tree pollen allergy come in contact with the airborne pollen, their immune system reacts leading to runny nose, sneezing, itchy watery eyes, and other allergy symptoms

[Conditions We Treat](#)

[New Patient Info](#)

[Patient Education](#)

[Lifetime Achievement Award](#)

[Contact Us](#)

## Seasonally Related Triggers

While the term “seasonal allergies” generally refers to grass, pollen and mold, there is a different group of allergy triggers that are closely tied to particular seasons. Among them:

**Smoke** (campfires in summer, fireplaces in winter)

**Insect** bites and stings (usually in spring and summer)

**Chlorine** in indoor and outdoor swimming pools

**Candy** ingredients (Halloween, Christmas, Valentine’s Day, Easter)

<http://acaai.org/allergies/treatment/allergy-shots-immunotherapy>

## Could I Be Allergic to Smoke?

In addition to triggers like pollen or dust mites, symptoms may also occur from irritants such as smoke and strong odors, or to changes in the temperature and humidity of the air. This happens because allergic rhinitis causes inflammation in the nasal lining, which increases sensitivity to inhalants.

<http://www.aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/allergies/rhinitis.aspx>

## Tips for Managing Asthma

Managing your asthma well means learning what triggers episodes, and what to do to prevent it. These tips, from the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, can help you better manage your asthma.

Asthma triggers vary from person to person and so do strategies to reduce asthma flare-ups.

Most people with asthma also have allergies, which triggers asthma symptoms. Your allergist can identify what your allergens are.

Quick-relief rescue medications provide temporary relief of asthma symptoms, while long-term controller medications are taken on a regular basis to control airway

we know all too well. The bad news is that the immune reaction has a delayed component that extends the symptoms much after the exposure to the allergen ends. Allergy being an additive process, it also increases your response to the other allergens such as dust mite, cats and dogs. Of course the reverse is also true that if you have dog and cat allergy and you are constantly exposed to them, you suffer more when the tree pollen comes along as an added trigger. But you don’t have to give up on outdoor fun, or your pet for that matter. A proactive plan of action will help you enjoy the most of spring, as well as your favorite critter.

## What Causes Allergies Anyway?

If you have allergies, or allergic rhinitis, your immune system mistakenly identifies a typically harmless substance as an intruder, or allergen. The immune system responds to the allergen by releasing histamine and chemical mediators that typically cause symptoms in the nose, throat, eyes, ears, skin and the lungs.

**Seasonal** allergic rhinitis (seasonal allergies, hay fever, etc.) is caused by pollen carried in the air during different times of the year in different parts of the country. In and around West Virginia, tree pollens are in the air from early March to mid-April, grass pollen comes along early May and lasts till late July, and then the king of allergy pollens, Ragweed tortures us from early August thru late November when the frost finally kills it. Allergic rhinitis can also be triggered by common indoor allergens such as the skin dander, urine and saliva found on pet hair, droppings from dust mites, cockroach fluff and molds which can be indoor as well as outdoor. This is called perennial allergic rhinitis, as symptoms typically occur year-round.

## Know Your Allergy Triggers

You may think you know that pollen is causing your suffering, but other substances may be involved as well. More than two-thirds of spring allergy sufferers actually have year-round symptoms. Allergy tests can help you find the source of your suffering and stop it, not just treat the symptoms.

Once you identify what you are allergic to you can devise strategies to avoid your triggers:

- Monitor pollen and mold counts. Weather reports in newspapers and on radio and television often include this information during allergy seasons. Look up under the heading "Pollen Counts" on the "[Patient Education](#)" page of our website for reliable pollen count prediction around where you live.
- Keep windows and doors shut at home and in your car

inflammation or prevent frequent asthma symptoms.

Your asthma medications may need to be adjusted as you and your asthma change, so stay in close touch with your healthcare provider.

2016 American Academy of Allergy,  
Asthma & Immunology

## Know Your Asthma Triggers

Common asthma triggers can include:

- Dust mites
- Animal dander
- Molds
- Pollen
- Cockroach fluff & droppings
- Tobacco smoke
- Exercise
- Strong odors
- Fumes
- Air pollution
- Cold Air

during allergy season, especially on breezy sunny days.

- Stay inside midday and during the afternoon, when pollen counts are highest.
- Take a shower, wash your hair and change your clothes after you've been working or playing outdoors. That way you won't carry the pollen to your pillow and be breathing it all night.
- Wear a NIOSH-rated 95 filter mask when mowing the lawn or doing other chores outdoors, and take appropriate medication beforehand.

Your provider may also recommend one or more medications to control symptoms. Some of the most widely recommended drugs are available without a prescription (over the counter); others, including some of the more effective nose sprays, require a prescription.

If you have a history of prior seasonal problems, we recommend starting medications to alleviate symptoms two weeks before they are expected to begin.

One of the most effective ways to treat seasonal allergies linked to pollen is immunotherapy (allergy shots). These injections expose you over time to gradually increasing amounts of your allergens, so your immune system learn to tolerate them instead of reacting to them.

An option to allergy shots (injections) is sublingual immunotherapy, or "SLIT". In recent years it has been found that the antigens given orally produce the same beneficial effect as the allergy injections. The mucus membrane under the tongue has special cells called Dendritic cells that grab the antigens and send them to the immune system for processing, the same way as the injected allergens are processed to induce tolerance. Using this method, the patient is exposed to the allergen to develop a natural defense against the allergen. Call us or talk to the provider when you visit us next or look up our website to see if you are a candidate for allergy injections or SLIT.

## "I'm Taking Allergy Meds, but the Symptoms Aren't Going Away"

As per AAAAI.Org, at least one out of three people with symptoms presumed to be allergic do not have allergies. Non-allergic rhinitis usually afflicts adults and causes year-round symptoms, especially runny nose and nasal congestion. This condition differs from allergic rhinitis because the immune system is not involved.

This is why allergy testing and treatment are important if allergy symptoms are interfering with your life.

## How Weather Affects Your Allergies

As mentioned above, spring allergies in West Virginia typically begin in March and last until the early summer. Mild winter temperatures can cause plants to pollinate early. A rainy spring can also promote rapid plant growth and also lead to an increase in mold, adding on to the "allergen load".

While the timing and severity of an allergy season vary across the country, the following climate factors also can influence how bad your symptoms might be:

- Tree, grass and ragweed pollens thrive during cool nights and warm days.
- Molds counts go up quickly in hot and humid weather.
- Pollen levels tend to peak in the morning hours.
- Rain washes pollen away, but pollen counts usually soar when there is a sunny day after rainfall.
- On a day with no wind, airborne allergens are grounded.
- Pollen counts surge on warm and windy days.

Moving to another climate to avoid allergies is usually not successful — allergens are virtually everywhere. Knowing what triggers your allergy symptoms and getting appropriate treatment is the best way to live well with allergies.

### **Springtime Asthma News**

When you have asthma, the airways of your lungs become hyper-reactive. On exposure to allergens, the airways become inflamed, swell up, and make thick sticky mucus resulting in cough, wheezing and shortness of breath. This is sometimes called allergic asthma or allergy-induced asthma. In the springtime, the most common asthma trigger is tree pollen. Learning what triggers your asthma symptoms may seem time-consuming, but knowing your enemy is the first step to defeating it. For example, if you know you are allergic to spring pollen, an avoidance plan as mentioned above gives you the best outcome.

Controlling your asthma means controlling your allergies, too. Knowing your triggers and avoiding or limiting exposure can reduce the severity of allergic asthma.

### **Occupational Allergies and Asthma**

Two of the most common work-related health issues facing workers today are Contact Dermatitis and Asthma, said researchers at the annual meeting of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI).

The research posits that “the incidence of occupational contact dermatitis in the United States is underestimated by 10 to 50 times.” (Donald Belsito MD)

Occupational contact dermatitis involves an acute or chronic inflammation of the skin from exposure to chemical, biological

or physical agents in the workplace. According to Dr. Belsito of Columbia University, registries are incomplete and the incidence is underreported. Differences in reporting across countries further complicate data on its global prevalence.

"After the skin, the lungs are the most commonly affected organ in the workplace," said Emil J. Bardana, Jr., M.D. Occupational asthma, which is characterized by inflammation of the airways with coughing, wheezing or shortness of breath, is caused by inhalation of dusts, gases, fumes, vapors or allergens in the workplace.

"Somewhere between 9 and 15 percent of asthma is probably work-related," said Dr. Bardana.

With both contact dermatitis and asthma, the reaction can be allergic or caused by irritation. In the case of occupational contact dermatitis, 80 percent of cases occur on the hands, which may become dry, chapped, patchy, red and scaly. Most often, the problem is caused by chronic irritation from water, soaps, solvents and greases. It can take months and even years of exposure before symptoms occur.

In the case of occupational asthma, spray paint is one common trigger, but anything from chemicals to welding fumes to soybean dust can be a culprit.

Asthma symptoms usually worsen during the work week for people with occupational asthma. In cases of allergic occupational asthma, there is often a latency period before symptoms occur. When an irritant causes the airway reaction, there is a sudden onset, usually within 24 hours of exposure.

### **Workers at Risk**

"In the United States, agricultural and manufacturing have particularly high rates of occupational contact dermatitis," said Dr. Belsito. Other jobs associated with higher rates of contact dermatitis include mechanic, metal worker, cleaner, health care worker, construction worker, cosmetologist, baker/cook and housekeeper.

There is crossover between industries related to a high incidence of contact dermatitis and jobs linked to occupational asthma.

### **Difficult Diagnosis**

Diagnosing occupational asthma is complicated by the fact that several respiratory conditions have similar symptoms (including reactive airway dysfunction syndrome, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and hypersensitivity pneumonitis). Difficulty also arises in differentiating between new cases of asthma caused by a work environment (occupational asthma) and the worsening of symptoms in workers who had asthma prior to their job.

## Management

With both occupational asthma and contact dermatitis, avoiding the irritant or allergen is the best line of defense.

"Eighty percent of workers recover from occupational contact dermatitis without impairment when managed correctly," said Dr. Belsito. "This includes accurately identifying the irritant or allergen and taking preventive efforts."

He added that most workers with occupational contact dermatitis who change jobs should do so for reasons other than dermatitis. A job change is only necessary in cases of severe allergy, where the agent causing the problem cannot be avoided. While occupational contact dermatitis often can be successfully managed without having to leave a profession, this is not always the case with occupational asthma.

In cases where an irritant is causing asthma, worker education, appropriate ventilation, or the use of masks might allow someone to continue working. In some cases, the loss of lung function associated with occupational asthma may be irreversible.

Allergy testing can be performed to identify the specific substances that trigger allergic reactions and determine the most appropriate and effective treatment.

With a little planning, you and your family can enjoy all the fun that comes with getting back outdoors with family and friends. All of us at the Asthma and Allergy Center are at your service to help you have A HEALTHY, HAPPY, ALLERGY FREE SPRING!

Sincerely,

Chandra M Kumar MD

**Asthma & Allergy Center**

208 MacCorkle Ave SE

Charleston WV 25314

(304) 343-4300

Charleston WV

Parkersburg WV (serving Marietta and Belpre OH)

Beckley WV

Logan WV

Ripley WV

**[ASTHMAWEB.COM](http://ASTHMAWEB.COM)**