TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Lubbock County Family Network

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Five Things You Might Not Know About Spring Allergies

Allergy Asthma & Immunology
www.aaaai.org

Spring is finally here, and for most of us, that is a big relief. For many others, however, this revival of life also means the return of sneezing, coughing, wheezing, itching and other vexing symptoms of spring allergies, commonly known as hay fever. To help you better prepare for the allergy season and better enjoy a tear-free spring, here are five things you might not have known about spring allergies.

1. **Flowers are beautiful, abundant and probably not the cause of your allergies**. Most springtime allergies are caused by tree pollen, not flowers. The most allergenic trees – such as oak – have small, or in the case of pine trees, no flowers. Trees that expend energy making beautiful flowers, rather than lots of pollen, know they will attract insects like bees to help them move the allergy-causing pollen from tree to tree.

   Conversely, the allergenic trees need to produce a lot more pollen to better the chance that wind will blow their pollen to the next tree, to aid their process of reproduction. You can tell when a tree is pollinating by looking for catkins (slim, cylindrical flower clusters with indistinct or no petals) hanging off the branches. On a windy day, these pollen grains can travel up to 100 miles.

2. **You can develop spring allergies at any age, even if you did not have them as a child**. If your mild, cold-like symptoms continue unabated and are unaccompanied by a fever, it might not be a cold at all. Although many people first develop allergies during pre-adolescence, it is nevertheless quite common for people to develop their first spring time allergies post high school or even into their 30s and 40s. Sometimes a change in environment can cause allergies if you have recently moved from the city to the country or vice a versa.

3. **Spring allergies actually start in the winter.** Although we commonly think of plants restarting their life cycle and pollinating around springtime – and bringing with them the much dreaded allergy symptoms – this process can actually start much earlier. This is because the trigger for plants to start pollinating is not only warming temperatures, but also the increasing length of sunlight during the day. Even as parts of the country still reel from below normal temperatures, the spring allergy season is already well under way.

   In New Mexico, highly allergenic trees such as cedar, juniper, oak and ash have already begun to pollinate by end of February. However, cedar trees pollinate twice each year, beginning at the end of January and lasting till March and then again from September to October. Juniper trees pollinate from February thru April. You will find regular pollen counts on the nightly TV news. Recirculating of the old tree pollens on dry, windy spring days is a cause of continual problems for allergy suffers thru June in most years. New Mexico is the Nation's second largest producer of pecans, behind Georgia and ahead of Texas. Pecan tree pollen is a big problem for residents of these states. Other tree causing allergy problems include elms and mulberries.

4. **If you are allergic to one tree, you are not necessarily allergic to them all**. While there is always some cross-reactivity between tree pollens, being allergic to one does not mean you are allergic to them all. Trees pollinate in a more or less predictable pattern and knowing which ones you are not sensitive to can help decrease the amount of medication you

use. The best way to find out which pollens triggers your allergies is to see an allergist and get tested.

5. **Eating local honey does not cure allergies.** While honey is healthy, delicious and supports local farmers, it is a misnomer that eating local honey will prevent allergies to local pollens. Bees eat the pollen – which contain the same amount of nutrients as a bean – so not much pollen actually gets into the honey. The concentration of pollen spores present in the honey is low and nowhere near the amount that allergists will give the patient during immunotherapy or allergy shots. Immunotherapy allergy treatment will gradually "vaccinate" the body against allergens by introducing small and regulated amounts of the offensive pollen allergen.

Blooming plants does not need to mean blooming allergies. The more you know about your spring allergies, the better you can guard against the irritating symptoms. See your allergist to learn more about how to have a beautiful spring that is free of sneezing, itching, and wheezing.

Source: Sonja Koukel, PhD, NMSU Community & Environmental Health Specialist; reported in Extension Home Economics Newsletter by Connie Moyers, Roosevelt County Extension Agent.

Is Your Child Care Center Preparing for Disasters?

If you operate a child care center or family day home, are you prepared for an emergency or disaster? If your children attend day care; have you checked out their emergency procedures? An area of risk management that sometimes gets neglected or overlooked is disaster management.

Being prepared for natural and man-made disasters is an integral part of an overall disaster management plan. Questions that come to mind regarding disaster preparedness include:

- ✓ Do we have a plan, and is it up to date?
- ✓ Does our plan cover preparedness, response, and recovery efforts?
- ✓ Can we find our plan?
- ✓ Has the staff been trained on how to use the plan?
- ✓ Have we practiced it enough?
- ✓ Have we adequately informed parents about the plan?
- ✓ Are we prepared to evacuate in case of a disaster?
- ✓ Do we have disaster supply kits?
- ✓ Are we prepared, if necessary, to shelter in place?

"How you answer these questions can make a difference in how prepared you are for an emergency or disaster and the aftermath that follows," says Dr. Rick Peterson, Assistant Professor and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Parenting Specialist. Being prepared is critical to minimize the trauma and stress associated with a disaster or emergency for staff, children, and parents.

Children are considered to be a vulnerable population during a disaster and as such need the protection of adults. "Children have characteristics that make them susceptible to the effects of disaster," says Dr. Peterson. "For example, young children, age birth to two, have little understanding of cause and effort relationships and past experience to deal with the crisis. However, 2-5 year olds may have abandonment fears after a disaster. Those children who are directly impacted by the disaster may experience both physical and psychological trauma effects of disaster," says Dr. Peterson. In some cases, children may incur long-term problems such as depression, prolonged grief, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Child care providers need to be prepared for emergencies and disasters, as they can occur quickly and without warning and can threaten the health and safety of the children and staff. Fortunately, there are resources available to assist child care administers and providers in their preparedness planning. Child care emergency preparedness guides can be accessed from several Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service websites: Disaster Education Network (EDEN) at http://texashelp.tamu.edu/ and Extension's Family Consumer Sciences website under Child Care at http://fcs.tamu.edu/.

Remember, being prepared is the best protection for the staff, the children, and the parents.

Source: Dr. Rick Peterson, Assistant Professor and Parenting Specialist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, July 2006.

Coconut Oil and Alzheimer's Disease


Source: http://higherperspective.com

Alzheimer's disease is an incurable form of dementia that afflicts an estimated 5 million people in the US. It is not part of the normal aging process, many developing early onset cases. Alzheimer's is a progressive disease– problems with memory, thinking and behavior worsening over time. While some people with Alzheimer's disease can live more than a decade after diagnosis, life expectancy is usually 7 years after onset of noticeable symptoms. No current cure or treatment to stop the progression of Alzheimer's disease has been discovered. However, some treatments are available to slow the worsening of dementia symptoms and improve quality of life of patients and their caregivers.

Coconut oil has recently been reported as a treatment for Alzheimer's disease. The theory behind this claim is that regions of the brain affected by Alzheimer's disease have lower rates of glucose metabolism. Processing coconut oil provides caprylic acid, a medium-chain triglyceride, which

the body breaks down into substances called "ketone bodies." These ketone bodies may provide an alternate energy source for the brain. Although, this is a novel idea, there is no research supports the claim.

Although some alternative therapies or remedies, such as coconut oil, may be potential candidates for treatments, concerns exist about using these therapies. First, the effectiveness and safety are unknown. For the approval of prescription drugs, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires rigorous scientific research to be performed. These same standards are not required of dietary supplements to make a claim. Secondly, the purity is unknown. Again, the FDA has no authority over supplement production and it is the manufacturer's responsibility to develop and enforce its own guidelines. Additionally, manufacturers of supplements are not required to report any problems, bad reactions or side effects from taking their product to the FDA. Although, the FDA does have voluntary channels for manufacturers, consumers, and health professionals to report concerns. Finally, dietary supplements can have serious interaction with other prescribed medications. Supplements should not be taken without first consulting your physician and pharmacist.

Resources:
About Alzheimer's: Statistics. Alzheimer's Foundation of America, 2012.
http://www.alzfdn.org/AboutAlzheimers/statistics.html.

What is Alzheimer's? Alz.org: Alzheimer's Association. 2012.
http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_what_is_alzheimers.asp.

Alternative Treatments. Alz. org: Alzheimer's Association. 2012.
http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_alternative_treatments.asp.

DeDea L. Can coconut oil replace caprylidene for Alzheimer disease? JAAPA. 2012.
http://www.jaapa.com/can-coconut-oil-replace-caprylidene-for-alzheimer-disease/article/25145/.

Coconut Oil. Snopes.com: Rumor has it. 2012. http://www.snopes.com/medical/disease/coconutoil.asp.

Source: Prepared by Wesley Danielle Daniels, BS, Dietetic Intern, Texas A&M University and Mary Kinney Bielamowicz, PhD, RD, LD, Regents Fellow, Professor and Nutrition Specialist, Department of Nutrition and Food Science, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M University System. November 2012.

Washing Food: Does it Promote Food Safety?


Source: http://science.kqed.org

Historically, we equate washing to cleanliness. We wash clothes, lines, cars, dishes and ourselves. So, it is logical that many people believe meat and poultry can be made cleaner and safer by washing it. Is this true? Does washing meat, poultry, eggs, fruits and vegetables make them safer to eat?

Washing Meat and Poultry

Washing raw poultry, beef, pork, lamb or veal before cooking is not recommended. Bacteria in raw meat and poultry juices can be spread to other foods, utensils and surfaces. We call this cross-contamination.

Some consumers think they are removing bacteria and making their meat or poultry safe. However, some of the bacteria are so tightly attached that you could not remove them no matter how many times you washed. But there are other types of bacteria that can be easily washed off and splashed on the surfaces of your kitchen. Failure to clean these contaminated areas can lead to foodborne illness. Cooking (baking, broiling, boiling and grilling) to the right temperature kills the bacteria, so washing meat is not necessary.

Using a food thermometer is the only sure way of knowing if your food has reached a high enough temperature to destroy foodborne bacteria. Cook all raw beef and veal steaks, roasts and chops to a minimum internal temperature of 145 degrees as measured with a food thermometer before removing meat from the heat source. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving and consuming. For reasons of personal preference, consumers may choose to cook meat to higher temperatures. Ground meats should be cooked to 155 degrees and poultry to 165 degrees.

Soaking Meat and Poultry

Callers to the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline sometimes ask about soaking poultry in salt water. This is a personal preference and serves no purpose for food safety. If you choose to do this, however, preventing cross-contamination when soaking and removing the poultry from the water is essential. Meat or poultry should be kept in the refrigerator while soaking.

Sometimes consumers wash or soak country ham, bacon or salt pork because they think it reduces the sodium or salt enough to allow these products to be eaten on a sodium-restricted diet. However, very little salt is removed by washing, rinsing or soaking a meat product and is not recommended.

Cross-Contamination
Hand washing after handling raw meat or poultry or its packaging is a necessity because anything you touch afterwards could become contaminated. In other words, you could become ill by picking up a piece of fruit and eating it after handling raw meat or poultry.

Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food, and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, tending to a sick person, blowing your nose, sneezing and coughing and handing pets.

Packaging materials from raw meat or poultry also can cause cross-contamination. Never reuse them with other food items. These and other disposable packaging materials, such as food or meat trays, egg cartons or plastic wraps should be discarded.

Washing Egg
Do not wash eggs before storing them. Washing is a routine part of commercial egg processing and the eggs do not need to be washed again. Federal regulations outline procedures and cleaners that may be used. "Bloom," the natural coating on just laid eggs that helps prevent bacteria from permeating the shell, is removed by the washing process and is replaced by a light coating of edible mineral oil which restores protection. Extra handling of the eggs, such as washing could increase the risk of cross-contamination, especially if the shell becomes cracked.

Washing Produce
Before eating or preparing fresh fruits and vegetables, wash the produce under cold running tap water to remove any lingering dirt. This reduces bacteria that may be present. If there is a firm surface, such as apples or potatoes, the surface can be scrubbed with a brush. Consumers should not wash fruits and vegetables with detergent or soap. These products are not approved or labeled by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FCA) for use on foods. You could ingest residues from soap or detergent absorbed on the produce.

When preparing fruits and vegetables, cut away any damaged or bruised areas because bacteria that cause illness can thrive in those places. Immediately refrigerate any fresh-cut items such as salad or fruit for best quality and safety.

Source: USDA and Roosevelt County NM Extension Home Economics Newsletter, Feb. 2015.

Tips for Preparing Food for Persons with Diabetes

- Do not buy special foods that are not needed. Use regular bread, meat, fruit, vegetables, milk and butter or margarine.
- Buy either water-packed fruits (unsweetened) fresh fruits, or those canned in light syrup. Or, can or freeze fresh fruits yourself. If you use fruit juices, purchase the unsweetened ones at your regular juice counter.
- Some dietetic foods can be purchased to add variety. Some of these are D-Zerta®; diet sweeteners made from either saccharin, sucralose, aspartame or acesulfame-K for sweetening foods and drinks; and low-calorie puddings. If having the later, you must remember to read the directions and use part of the skim or half percent fat milk from your meal pattern.
- Use standard household measuring spoons and cups. Always measure.
- Do not fry foods unless you use one fat allowance from your meal plan.
- Avoid deep-fried, creamed or breaded foods. Avoid food mixtures if you can not identify the ingredients and cooking techniques.
- Cook food by boiling, simmering, poaching, steaming, pressure cooking (without fat), baking, roasting, grilling, stir-frying, broiling or pan broiling. Pan broiling is cooking in a heavy skillet over low heat without added fat. You may add a small amount of fat from your meal plan if you desire.
- Food may be cooked with the rest of the family meal, but remove a portion before extra fat, flour, gravies, sauces, sugar, butter and cream are added.
- Follow the meal pattern provided by your dietitian or physician. Do not add to or take away from your plan without consulting your dietitian and/or physician.
- If you are going on a picnic or carrying your lunch to work, use ice chests, thermos bottles and other suitable containers to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold so that food is safe as well as nutritious.

Source: Prepared by Mary K. Bielamowicz, Ph.D., R.D., L.D., Regents Fellow, Professor and Extension Nutrition Specialist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, the Texas A&M System.

Source: http://today.agrilife.org

Recipe Corner

Cabbage-Fruit Salad

2 cups shredded cabbage*
2 oranges, sectioned and seeded*
2 medium apples, chopped*
1 8-ounce can crushed pineapple, drained
2 tablespoons raisins (optional)
4 tablespoons plain low-fat yogurt
1 teaspoon honey (optional)

1. Wash your hands and clean your cooking area.
2. Clean the tops of canned food items before opening them.
3. Wash and chop cabbage.
4. Wash and scrub oranges and apples with a vegetable brush or with your hand. Cut as directed.
5. Mix cabbage, oranges, apples and pineapple together in a mixing bowl.
6. Add raisins, yogurt and honey.
7. Chill until ready to serve.

*WIC Approved Food Package

Nutrition Facts: Serving Size: 1 cup; Servings Per Container: 6; Calories 90; Total Fat 0g; Saturated Fat 0g; Trans Fat 0g; Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 15mg; Total Carbohydrate 22g; Dietary Fiber 3g; Sugars 18g; Protein 2g, Vitamin A 2%; Calcium 6%; Vitamin C 50%; Iron 2%

Tex-Mex Corn Chowder

1 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed*
1 15-ounce can kidney beans, drained and rinsed*
1 15.25-ounce can whole kernel corn, drained
1 14.75-ounce can cream style sweet corn
1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes with garlic and onion
½ cup chicken broth
½ cup water
2 tablespoons fresh cilantro
¼ cup shredded reduced fat cheddar cheese (optional)*
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chili peppers (optional)

1. Wash your hands and clean your cooking area.
2. Clean the tops of canned food items before opening them.
3. Pour black and kidney beans into a colander and rinse them under cool water.
4. Combine whole kernel corn, undrained cream corn, undrained tomatoes, beans, broth and ½ cup water in a medium sauce pan.
5. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and cook on low heat for 5 minutes.
6. Sprinkle each serving with cheese, chili pepper, and cilantro, if desired.

NOTE: To reduce the sodium in this recipe, compare the nutrition facts labels when shopping for ingredients and/or substitute cooked dry beans prepared with little or no salt.

* WIC Approved Food Package

Nutrition Facts: Serving Size: 1½ cups; Servings Per Container: 6; Calories 220; Calories from fat 10; Total Fat 1g; Saturated Fat 0g; Trans Fat 0g; Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 400mg; Total Carbohydrate 42g; Dietary Fiber 12g; Sugars 9g; Protein 12g; Vitamin A 10%; Vitamin C 35%; Calcium 10%; Iron 15%

Sincerely,

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