

Vision Of Health

Five Questions To Ask Your Doctor

(NAPSA)—A visit to your doctor is the way to get answers about allergies, according to Dr. Reza Haque.

“Before you meet with your doctor, write down any questions that come to mind about your symptoms,” advised Dr. Haque. “During your appointment, refer to your list and get immediate, personal answers.”

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America says an estimated 50 to 60 million Americans suffer from allergies. Allergies are the sixth leading cause of chronic disease in the United States.

According to Dr. Haque, people who think they may have allergies should ask their doctors:

1. Do I have allergies or a cold?

If you itch, it's probably allergies. Itching of the nose, ears, or mouth is a sign of allergies, said Haque. Other symptoms are:

- Spasmodic, “machine gun” sneezing.
- Clear, watery nasal secretions (with a cold, mucus is thick and opaque).
- Normal temperature.

Colds are often accompanied by a fever, sore throat or cough, Haque said, and are usually gone within 14 days. Allergies linger as long as the allergen is present.

2. Do I need to be tested for allergies?

Possibly a skin, patch or scratch test may be done. It's not painful and requires no injections. “If your allergist knows what triggers your reactions, then he or she can determine the best treatment,” said Dr. Haque.

3. Is it OK to take over-the-counter (OTCs) drugs for allergies?

Tell your doctor what you're taking. OTCs can interact with prescription medications.



Do you have an allergy or a cold? Your doctor can help you tell—and treat it.

“Talk to your doctor before taking nonprescription products, especially if you're taking medication for another condition such as high blood pressure, heart disease or asthma,” he said.

4. Why do I feel sleepy after taking OTC allergy medications?

Some nonprescription medications contain antihistamines, which block the release of itch-causing histamine. Nonprescription antihistamines have a sedating effect, said Dr. Haque.

“Not all OTC products contain histamine, but people need to check the labels,” said Dr. Haque.

5. What's an effective way to relieve itchy eyes due to allergies?

“Apply allergy medication directly in the form of eyedrops,” said Haque. Novartis Ophthalmics makes an allergy eye drop called Zaditor (ketotifen fumarate ophthalmic solution 0.025%).

According to Dr. Haque, Zaditor both blocks histamine's effects and thus stops the itch and stabilizes the cells that release histamine providing further protection from itch for up to 12 hours.