

Understanding Allergic Asthma

(NAPSA)—Many people associate allergies with outdoor activities, exposure to pollen and grass, and bouts of sneezing and sniffing. However, as the weather turns colder, many Americans will soon turn their attention to indoor activities, subjecting themselves to indoor allergies triggered by allergens such as mold, mildew, pet dander and dust mites. For millions of Americans, these allergens have the potential to be particularly troubling, as they can trigger allergic asthma.

In fact, more than 60 percent of people with asthma also suffer from allergies, according to the National Institutes of Health, and research suggests that allergens play a large role in triggering airway inflammation and asthma symptoms. Asthma is a life-threatening lung disease in which airways become inflamed, leading to episodes of breathing difficulty (e.g., wheezing, shortness of breath). It is estimated that 17 million Americans suffer from asthma. Of these, 10 million (or nearly 60 percent) suffer specifically from allergic asthma.

“There’s some characteristic symptoms of asthma that people can be aware of, such as chest tightness associated with a cough, and subsequent wheezing,” explained Dr. Gailen Marshall Jr., MD, PhD, FAAAAI. “During the colder months of the year, allergic asthma sufferers can reduce the risk of an attack by taking simple steps to manage the presence of allergens in their home.”

These tips include avoiding the buildup of mold or mildew by maintaining leaks, minimizing contact with pets by keeping animals out of the allergic individual’s bedroom, and regulating household humidity levels. The American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI) suggests working with your primary physician or an allergist/immunologist to develop a personalized treatment plan for allergic asthma.

For some patients, this treatment plan may include using current asthma therapies including immunotherapy, oral and inhaled corticosteroids, long- and short-acting beta agonists, and leukotriene modifiers. These therapies decrease ongoing inflammation and reduce bronchial constriction

AAAAI’s Tips for Combating Indoor Allergens*

- To avoid **mold or mildew**, promptly repair/seal leaking roofs or pipes; never put carpeting on concrete or damp floors; avoid storing clothes, papers or other items in damp areas.
- To combat symptoms of **animal allergy**, minimize contact with animals; keep animals out of bedroom; bathe animals consistently.
- To reduce **dust mites**, it is important to control humidity to below 50%. 

*Source: www.AAAAAI.org

in asthma.

A new vein of research has concentrated on an investigational regimen designed to short-circuit the allergic reaction in the body before it even begins. These treatments specifically target Immunoglobulin E (IgE), an antibody that triggers the start of the body’s allergic cascade, and are based on the theory that an imbalance in the immune system may contribute to the development of allergic disease.

IgE’s involvement in allergic asthma begins when an allergic individual is exposed to an allergen (such as dust, mold or pet dander). The IgE protein recognizes the foreign substance and binds it to an inflammation cell, known as a mast cell, setting off a cascade of events. This binding of IgE and the allergen triggers a release of inflammatory chemicals in the body, which, in turn, can cause allergic asthma symptoms such as chest tightness, coughing, and wheezing.

“Although preventable, allergic asthma is a serious bronchial disease, which demands the attention and care of a trained health-care provider,” said Dr. Marshall. “If the characteristic symptoms of allergic asthma are persistent, I recommend contacting a physician immediately.”

For more information on allergic asthma, and management approaches, please contact the AAAAI at 1-800-822-2762, or log onto their Web site at www.aaaai.org.