

Tips for Allergen Control

Food Allergy vs. Food Intolerance

Is the Salt Room "What the Doctor Ordered" for your allergies?"

Staff Spotlight

"The child must know that he is a miracle, that since the beginning of the world there hasn't been, and until the end of the world there will not be, another child like him."
Pablo Casals

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What's your allergy?

Tips for Allergen Control

When spring arrives and seasonal allergy symptoms emerge, parents often ask for ways to quickly relieve child's symptoms. There are many over the counter, prescription and homeopathic options for treating allergy symptoms. These all work by minimizing the runny noses, sneezing, and itchy eyes that often accompany this year's blooms. However, the most important aspect of controlling allergy symptoms is thorough and consistent avoidance of allergens. An allergen is a substance that triggers an allergic reaction, and could be almost anything. Some of the most common environmental allergens are pollens, molds, dust mites, and animal dander.

Controlling pollens and molds

- Ventilate bathrooms, basements, and other dark, moist places that commonly grow mold
- Use a weak bleach solution consisting of 1 cup of bleach per gallon of water to kill mold in bathrooms and other areas
- Use air conditioning: it removes excess air moisture, filters out pollens from the outside, and provides air circulation throughout your home. Filters should be changed once a month
- Keep windows and doors shut during pollen season
- When mold or pollen counts are high, kids should take their allergy medication before going outdoors. After playing outdoors, they should bathe and change clothes.

- Drive with the car windows shut and air conditioning on during mold and pollen seasons

Controlling dust mites

- Avoid feather or down pillows and blankets. Encase pillows, mattresses, and box springs in zippered dust mite-proof covers, and keep them clean by wiping them down once a week.
- Wash sheets and blankets your child sleeps on once a week in very hot water (130° F or higher)
- Avoid carpeting in a child's bedroom and playroom as much as possible (they can collect dust and harbor dust mites). If you have carpeting, vacuum daily
- Removed stuffed animals from your child's bed. Only a few stuffed animals should be allowed in your child's room, and these should be washed weekly.

Controlling animal dander

- If a child is allergic to a pet, discuss finding a new home for the animal. Once a pet is removed from the home it may take several months before all the dander is gone
- Wash pets at least once a week to removed excess dander and collected pollens, although high levels of dander can return within a few days
- Never allow the pet into the allergic child's bedroom and keep the door closed at all times

Food Allergy vs. Food Intolerance

The purpose of the immune system is to locate foreign substances in the body and get rid of them. People with food allergies have immune systems that "over-react" to typically harmless substances in food and/or drinks. This occurs when the body forms antibodies for those substances (allergens), causing chemicals to be released. Nine out of ten allergic reactions to food are caused by the top 8 food allergies: milk, soy, eggs, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish. The most severe and life threatening reactions are more common with peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, fish, and egg allergies, as well as in people with asthma.

Food allergies are not to be confused with food intolerances. Allergies are a disease of the immune system. An intolerance, or sensitivity, is a reaction of the digestive system. Lactose intolerance is one of the most common food sensitivities. Symptoms of intolerance are bloating, flatulence, weight loss, malnutrition, abdominal distention, diarrhea, and floating and/or foul smelling stools.

Symptoms of allergies may affect more than one system of the body. The digestive system comes in contact with food first, and is often the site of the initial symptoms of an allergic reaction. These symptoms include swelling and itching of the lips or lining of the mouth, throat tightness, nausea, cramping, pain, and vomiting. Other parts of the body that may be affected are the respiratory system, the circulatory system, and the skin. An allergic reaction to food or drink can begin one minute to two hours after consumption. The severity and timing of the reaction depends on a variety of factors, such as how sensitive the person is to the allergen, the amount consumed, other

food consumed, how the food is prepared, and other medical problems.

Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening allergic reaction that can cause breathing problems and loss of consciousness, among other symptoms. This occurs when people have excessive immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies in their blood that release histamine, when they are exposed to an allergen. Without emergency medical treatment it can cause death. Anaphylaxis usually occurs minutes after contact with an allergen. Anaphylaxis is indicated by severe symptoms such as rapid pulse, swelling of tissues, paleness, sweating, faintness, confusion, flushed skin, convulsions, and passing out. Anaphylaxis is typically triggered by allergies to medications, food, and insect stings. It is important for those with severe allergies to always carry an injectable epinephrine, such as an EpiPen or Ana-Kit, which should be promptly injected at the first sign of an anaphylactic reaction. An epinephrine injection should be immediately followed by medical care since symptoms can recur hours later, even if the child feels better at first.

If you believe your child may have a food allergy or if you have a family history of food allergies, talk to your doctor. Knowing what foods your child is allergic to and having an anaphylactic action plan is an important part of allergy management. For more information on food allergies and how to make an anaphylaxis action plan, visit http://cpnonline.org/display_content.jsp?subsection=79543.



Is the Salt Room “What the Doctor Ordered” for your allergies?

Allergen-Free Pretend Peanut Butter Cookies

- 3 Tbsp. water
- 1 Tbsp. ground flaxseed meal
- 1 1/4 cup Bob’s Red Mill Gluten-Free all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. xanthan gum
- 1/2 cup organic palm fruit oil shortening
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup Sunbutter
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

Directions

Preheat the oven to 375° and line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

In a cup combine the water and flaxseed meal and allow to thicken for 3-5 minutes.

In large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, salt, and xanthan gum. In the bowl of a stand mixer, cream together the shortening, sugars, and Sunbutter. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, then beat in the flaxseed mixture and the vanilla. Scrape down the sides of the bowl again. Stir in the dry ingredients until thoroughly combined.

Using a small ice cream scoop, drop the dough 2 inches apart onto prepared sheets. Press the cookies down with the tines of a fork (dipped in sugar) in a criss-cross pattern.

Bake the cookies for 10-12 minutes or until the edges are golden and the tops no longer look wet. Transfer the baking sheets from the oven to cooling racks and cool for 10 minutes, then transfer the cookies directly onto the cooling racks.

This is a gluten free, dairy free, egg free, nut free, soy free recipe from *Allergy-Free Desserts* by Elizabeth Gordon

A great alternative to peanut butter is Sunbutter, which is made from specially roasted sunflower seeds. This versatile spread is peanut free, tree-nut free, and gluten free. Sunbutter can be used in baking, cooking, or to make a classic “PB & J”.

For more information, visit www.sunbutter.com



*It’s a sweet, sweet life, living by the salty sea.”
Jimmy Buffett*

You may have heard of The Salt Room, a new facility here in Orlando that claims to provide an environment that improves your health and treats your diseases. Allergies, asthma, ear infections, even cystic fibrosis and psoriasis—all made better by breathing the therapeutic air of these salt spas. Sounds great, but does it work? Is it harmful? Should you try it?

BACKGROUND

We all have experienced feeling better after a weekend at the beach. However the theory of the Salt Room is actually based more on a Russian cave than a coastal getaway. The salt mines of Eastern Europe have been thought to have health benefits, primarily helping respiratory illnesses. The attempt to recreate this climate is typically referred to as “halo-therapy” (“halo” - “salt”) or “speleotherapy” (“speleo” - “cave”).

NOT “ALTERNATIVE” - JUST UNPROVEN

Halotherapy is representative of many things in medicine. Sometimes people will use the terms “Conventional vs. Unconventional”, “Standard vs. Alternative” when discussing various treatments, but these terms are fairly meaningless. Essentially all medical therapies -- medicines, surgeries, diets, etc. -- can be better divided into one of three groups—*those that work*; *those that don’t*; and *those we don’t know yet*. And to which group a therapy belongs is based on **evidence**.

The word “evidence” has a specific and distinct meaning in medicine. Evidence comes from controlled, well-conducted studies that demonstrate consistent results repeatedly. Personal testimonies are not the same as evidence (“I took this medicine and I felt so much better the next day”). Testimony may be valid evidence in other arenas (e.g. law, history); it isn’t in science. Objective data, though far more difficult to obtain, is what determines proof in science. Decisions about choosing medical therapies must begin with determining in which category the therapy belongs and then weighing the benefits (if any) against the possible (known or unknown) side effects, costs, etc.

HOW TO NAVIGATE

So how should a patient try to navigate the variety of medical therapies available? Here are a few suggestions:
When it comes to children, be conservative. As pediatricians,

we tend to rely on and recommend therapies that have been proven to be safe and effective, avoiding therapies that are questionable in either of those two ways. (Exceptions are desperate, situations, e.g. fatal illnesses and chronic debilitating conditions, with other therapies having been unsuccessful).
Don’t confuse “natural” with “effective” – Man-made recreations of things that occur naturally don’t necessarily work the same way. For instance, vitamin supplements don’t give the same benefits as fruits and vegetables. There probably are unique mechanisms in nature that are not yet understood and not replicated in these attempts to simulate.

Don’t confuse “natural” with “safe” -- Plenty of “natural” things can be quite dangerous. From sunburn and skin cancer to tobacco to lightning strikes to cyanide, nature gives us many things that can be harmful to our health.
Availability over the counter doesn’t mean that it is safe (or effective). Cold medicines are an example of a therapy that has not been shown to be effective and has been shown to have potential adverse effects (some quite serious). Yet they continue to be both marketed to the public and even recommended by some healthcare providers.

Beware of the **typical marketing strategies** – The following phrases and tactics are commonly used for therapies that are lacking good evidence: “For centuries...”, lots of technical language (sounding really scientific) and testimonies but no good data. Become a shrewd consumer of healthcare.

Talk to your physician – Patients tend to avoid discussing “alternative therapies” with their physician. Yet there may be some guidance that can be offered or interactions to be aware of. (Did you know that zinc, commonly used to for cold symptoms, can cause diarrhea and make antibiotics less effective?).

This is not an attempt to write against things outside “the medical establishment.” It is simply stating the importance of good evidence and caution toward therapies lacking it. Some “new”, unproven therapies will in time be shown to be beneficial; however, for every one that ends up beneficial, many more will be found to not work (including some shown to be harmful).

So, back to the Salt Room. Does it work? There are certainly some logical reasons to believe that it might be helpful, but right now it belongs in the “unproven” category. Could it be harmful? Used in moderation, it is unlikely (other than the costs). But could someone have an adverse reaction to something in this type of environment? It is possible, and this is the type of event studies would show. Show you try it? Hopefully, at least now you feel a little better equipped to answer that question for yourself.

Team Spotlight: Ebony Ingram



Hometown: Fort Pierce, FL Favorite Movie: Coming to America

Favorite Dessert: Carrot Cake

Kids: 2 daughters- Ahniya & Natayvia

Favorite Book: The Bible

Favorite Sports Team: Miami Heat

Favorite Food: Shrimp Alfredo Life Motto: “Love hard, forgive easy.”

Why she loves working at Middleton Pediatrics: “Because I get to work with beautiful coworkers such as Kelli, Liz, Lisa, Ginger, and Christine, and the best doctor in the world, Dr. Middleton! And I love kids!”

Favorite Restaurant: Chili’s

Favorite things to do in your free time: dance, playing basketball and volleyball with her daughters

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