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Understanding
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Fear not the fur
Ways you can
manage pet allergies

**MEDIA
PLANET**

May 2012

ALLERGIES, YOU & YOUR PET



PROTECTING WHAT'S PRECIOUS



Bruce Croxon speaks out about raising children with severe food allergies
What you need to know about the different types of allergies

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER WAHL



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CHALLENGES

TIP
1
PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR PET'S COAT



ON THE ALERT
The support of family, friends and teachers is important in managing allergies in children.

WE RECOMMEND

Talking to teens
Youth from across the nation share their tips for coping with allergies.
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“If I could share something with other teens, it would be that food allergies are not the end of the world. As long as you take necessary precautions, you can easily have fun with all your friends.”

The air you breathe p. 5
Why you should take care in hot weather, even beyond city limits.

Read between the lines p. 6
What you need to know, from deciphering labels to desensitization.

Have you or someone you know been diagnosed with a food allergy? If so, you understand the challenges faced by **approximately 2.5 million Canadians with a self-reported food allergy**

Safely managing food allergies: Are you prepared?

Have you or someone you know been diagnosed with a food allergy? If so, you understand the challenges faced by approximately 2.5 million Canadians with a self-reported food allergy, according to a recent research study. * With more and more people now affected, food allergy has become a growing public health concern in Canada.

Allergic individuals face a number of issues, one of the most challenging of which is coming to terms with the fact that allergic reactions are unpredictable and can vary from one episode to the next. Reactions can range from mild—such as rash or hives—to the most severe and potentially life threatening, including difficulty breathing and sudden drop in blood pressure. Unfortunately, there is no way to tell how quickly a reaction could progress or how severe it might be. And, with no known cure, avoidance of foods that can trigger a reaction is the only way to stay safe.

While this uncertainty can be daunting for many, food allergies can be managed with the right informa-



“Remember—it’s important to be careful, not fearful, when dealing with food allergies.”

Beatrice Povolo
Director, Marketing & Communications, Anaphylaxis Canada

tion and preparation. Remember—it’s important to be careful, not fearful, when dealing with food allergies.

Be ready with emergency medication

Epinephrine is life-saving medication which is available to consumers in ready-to-use auto-injectors that contain a pre-measured dose of the drug. Currently, there are two on the market in Canada: EpiPen® and Twinject®. Surprisingly, many people who have been advised by their physician to carry an auto-injector do not always have one with them or they hesitate to use it in an emergency. If you are at risk for anaphylaxis, make sure to have your auto-injector with you at all

times and know when and how to use it. Accidents are never planned.

Keys to staying safe

As part of any good management plan,

there are a number of safety measures that must be considered, whether you have food allergies yourself, or care for someone who does. Although the primary responsibility for managing allergies lies with the individual at risk, you need the support and understanding of others (e.g., friends, family, teachers).

For more information or to donate to Anaphylaxis Canada please visit www.anaphylaxis.ca.

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

If you are at risk:

- Learn the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction.
- Carry your epinephrine auto-injector with you and know how to use it. Teach others how to use it, too.
- Read ingredient lists carefully, making sure food products don’t contain things you are allergic to.
- Ask about ingredients and food preparation whenever eating away

from home.

How family and friends can help:

- Reading ingredient labels and preventing cross-contamination in food preparation.
- Washing their hands and utensils thoroughly when preparing or serving meals/snacks.
- Knowing the signs of a reaction and how to help.

Living in harmony with your pets

Pet allergies are very common. Half of children with asthma have symptoms triggered by pets as do many adults.

In people allergic to animal dander, exposure to animals with fur and, to a lesser extent, birds, can cause serious asthma symptoms. To find out if you are allergic to animal dander, talk to your doctor about getting an allergy assessment done. Taking steps to avoid allergic triggers will help you live a symptom-free life.

Facing reality

If your allergy test shows that you are allergic, it is recommended that you find a new home for your pet. Unfortunately, there is no such thing as an allergy-free dog or cat. People with animal allergies are allergic to the dander (flakes of shed skin), saliva and urine. All furred animals shed dander. Bathing the animal may help but some experts say that this is not enough to significantly impact dander levels. If you choose to keep the pet, try to keep it out of the bedroom,



or better yet, out of the house. Keeping a pet that you are allergic to will increase the severity of your asthma over time.

Here are some tips to help minimize your exposure to pet dander:

- Never allow the pet in the bedroom

- Keep pet in areas where there is a hard floor surface that is easily cleaned
- Keep animals outside as much as possible
- Do not allow the pet on furniture or carpeting
- Wash pet bedding regularly
- Avoid petting or handling the pet
- Installing air purifiers may help reduce exposure.

Reduced exposure to allergens = reduced asthma symptoms.

For More Information

Contact the Asthma Society of Canada at 1-866-787-4050 or visit www.Asthma.ca.

COURTESY OF THE ASTHMA SOCIETY OF CANADA
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MEDIA PLANET

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DON'T MISS!



Fighting back against pet allergies

■ Pet allergies are more common than you think—research shows that up to 10 percent of the general population and 40 percent of allergic individuals react to cats and dogs. Allergy to cats is twice as common as allergy to dogs.

People who are allergic are reacting to proteins that are produced by the animal’s skin or saliva, and which are also found in the hair, mucus, urine and dander (dead skin cells) of both cats and dogs.

The protein acts as an allergen to allergy-prone people. For someone who has pet allergies, coming into contact with this protein can trigger everything from sneezing, watery eyes and rashes to difficulty breathing and, in severe cases, an asthma attack.

New medications can make living with allergies more comfortable. There is also a wide variety of nasal sprays, antihistamines, decongestants, and inhalers and immunotherapy to help control allergy symptoms.

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TAKE ACTION

In memorium: Share your story

■ This award is dedicated to the life of Sabrina Shannon, an inspiring teenager who suffered a fatal anaphylactic reaction in 2003. Since her passing, Sabrina's parents and other members of the allergy community have worked to keep Sabrina's spirit alive by advocating for safer school environments. In 2005, Sabrina's Law was passed in

Ontario, providing landmark legislation that has influenced school board policies across Canada.

How many awards will be granted?

Two awards of \$1,000 each will be granted: one to a student who is entering the first year of post-second-

ary education, and one to a student who is already enrolled and continuing in a post-secondary program.

How will recipients be selected?

A committee of Anaphylaxis Canada staff and volunteers will review each application and select recipients

based on their submission of a short essay. This essay should describe:

- How the applicant has been affected by life-threatening allergies
- How the applicant has raised awareness and educated others about life-threatening allergies

Selected recipients will demonstrate a strong commitment and creative approach to raising awareness and educating others about life-threatening allergies. Applicants will be notified of their application status by July 30, 2012. Email whyriskit@anaphylaxis.ca for more information



If only it were this obvious.

If you've ever had even a mild reaction to food products such as nuts, milk, eggs or shellfish, you could unfortunately be at risk of having a severe allergic reaction in the future. And although you may be careful, prepared foods can sometimes contain hidden ingredients or may have come into contact with food allergens through serving utensils or manufacturing equipment. You can't always avoid your allergy triggers, but you can be prepared by carrying an EpiPen® Auto-Injector.

Spotting food allergy triggers isn't always easy, but being prepared can be. Talk to your healthcare provider or visit **EpiPen.ca**.

EpiPen® and EpiPen® Jr (epinephrine) Auto-Injectors are indicated for the emergency treatment of anaphylactic reactions in patients who are determined to be at increased risk for anaphylaxis, including individuals with a history of anaphylactic reactions. Selection of the appropriate dosage strength is determined according to patient body weight.

EpiPen® and EpiPen® Jr Auto-Injectors are designed as emergency supportive therapy only. They are not a replacement for subsequent medical or hospital care. After administration, patients should seek medical attention immediately or go to the emergency room. For the next 48 hours, patients must stay within close proximity to a healthcare facility or where they can call 911. To ensure this product is right for you, always read and follow the label. Please consult the Consumer Information leaflet in your product package for complete dosage and administration instructions.



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INSPIRATION

The newest member of Dragons' Den, Bruce Croxon, is not only outspoken about entrepreneurship, he plans to do the same for food allergies.

TIP

2

A GOOD DIET IS VITAL FOR A HEALTHY PET AND CAN REDUCE ALLERGENS

Raising the profile of food allergies

CHANGE

It was while on holiday in Barbados eight years ago that the Croxons noticed their son, Lucas, then about a year old, wasn't reacting to milk very well.

They didn't think too much about it, but got him tested when they returned to Toronto.

What they



PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER WAHL

learned had their heads spinning – Lucas, now 9, is allergic to peanuts, tree nuts, dairy, egg, fish and sesame seeds. Addy, their daughter, who is two years younger, is allergic to egg.

It wasn't welcome news for the parents, who are avid travellers and foodies. The children's food allergies have changed their family life, and it hasn't been easy, entrepreneur and venture capitalist Bruce Croxon, and the newest host on CBC's Dragons' Den, admits frankly.

They never go anywhere without their EpiPens and medication, and their travel has been limited, but the Croxons try not to allow the allergies to claim too much of their lives.

Looking on the bright side

His wife, Debra, is passionate about food, "so it's ironic we've been dealt this hand. We don't eat out a lot, just because the anxiety factor would be too great. The allergies have forced us to eat very healthily at home," Croxon says.

"I'm always looking on the bright side -- there is a lot of good information available, and organizations like Anaphylaxis Canada provide ample support for families like mine.

"The reality is -- worse things could hap-

PROFILE

Bruce Croxon

Born: October 27, 1960

Hometown: Toronto, Ontario

Career

Highlights: Newest investor on Dragons' Den.

Heads Round13, a company dedicated to incubating and investing digital start-ups. Executive chairman of Vida Spas, a chain of wellness spas in B.C and Seattle. Co-founded the online dating service Lavalife in 1987 which sold for \$180 million in 2004.

pen to you. People with serious food allergies can and do live productive, healthy and active lives. Having a food allergy, no matter how severe, doesn't have to be a reason to not do the things you want to do.

"I'm not naive about the dangers, being ill-informed, accidentally eating the wrong foods can create a life and death situation for the sufferer, but we cannot have everything we want in life," he adds.

Affecting families nation-wide

About seven percent, or 2.5 million Canadians self-report having at least one food allergy. This number doesn't include caregivers and families affected by the allergy.

Great strides have been made in raising awareness, Croxon says, but more can be done. For example, peanut allergy has a high profile and that is because of determined lobbying by individuals and organizations. Schools, for example, are peanut free zones, but this can be taken further -- into the skies, for example.

Already, Westjet doesn't serve peanuts on their flights, something Air Canada can do. "I am a loyal Air Canada customer, but we have to give the airline 48 hours notice so that they can create a peanut free zone around the seat. My point is -- it is tough to keep just a few rows completely clean of peanuts on

special request. It would be much easier to ban it altogether," he points out.

"It's not Air Canada policy yet, but I am doing my best to convince them of the benefits such a policy could bring to their business."

Canadian food labelling laws can also be tightened to be as rigorous as their European counterparts, he adds.

Eternally vigilant

Living with severe food allergies demands constant vigilance which can be wearying. A person is forced to become a creature of habit, regardless of personal temperament.

"Doing things on a whim becomes a memory. You go to an unfamiliar place and you have to know where the nearest hospital is, you have to have kitchenettes in your suites when you are on holiday. You cannot leave things to chance. You must plan ahead."

Dragon's Den has increased his public profile tremendously, and this has created additional responsibilities, Croxon confides.

"It has put the pressure on me to get my priorities right. I want to spend more time speaking on the things that matter to me."

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LIVING WITH ALLERGIES: THE TEEN SCOOP

	 <p>Isaac Eng 18 years old, Mississauga, Ontario</p>	 <p>Sydney Proudfoot 19 years old, Oakville, Ontario</p>	 <p>Thomas Miles 19 years old, Winnipeg, Manitoba</p>	 <p>Tess Bantock 18 years old, Kamloops, British Columbia</p>
<p>Question 1: What is the biggest challenge about managing food allergies?</p>	<p>When I think of a challenge in terms of my food allergy, it's difficult to single out one dire obstacle in particular. I suppose it would be consistency. Always remembering to follow every precaution and procedure correctly and without fail isn't always the easiest. Remember my auto-injector (e.g. EpiPen), call where I'm eating beforehand; inquire when I arrive; notify who I'm with about my food allergies and so on. No individual step is 'difficult', but ensuring all are completed in a comprehensive manner can present some challenges.</p>	<p>I believe the biggest challenge is getting others to understand my limitations when it comes to the foods I can eat. I am well versed at explaining the severity of my allergies but some simply do not seem to grasp the concept that food allergies are not just "sniffles and itchy eyes." In fact, they can be deadly if not dealt with promptly. Although I am not pursuing it as a career, I would like to say that I am a professional when it comes to reading food labels and avoiding risky situations. It is not so easy to get my friends and extended family to understand the risks of cross contamination and dangers like that. I have to constantly explain the risks.</p>	<p>In my experience, the biggest challenges in managing food allergies have changed as I've grown up. In elementary, the biggest challenge was dealing with the fact that I was different than the other kids, and I couldn't eat what they got to eat. As a more independent teen/young adult, the biggest challenge I find is staying vigilant—consistently checking ingredient listings and alerting servers of my allergies at restaurants—things that were previously taken care of by my parents.</p>	<p>The biggest challenge for me regarding managing my food allergies would be helping others realize how serious it can be. I feel like a lot of people assume allergies are as simple as getting itchy eyes or sneezy and don't grasp how life threatening they can be. I personally never want to sound like a 'know it all' or come off in the wrong manner.</p>
<p>Question 2: How do you deal with having food allergies when you go out with friends?</p>	<p>This is an interesting question for me. It almost seems as though my friends are far more concerned with my allergies than I am. Mind you, that's not because I'm careless at all. I have simply chosen and established a group of friends who genuinely care for my well being. They often ask before I do if a restaurant is safe well before I've even been invited. I believe that half the battle is already fought for you if just by selecting the right kind of people to surround yourself with; and that goes for far more than just food allergies.</p>	<p>The first step I always take when going out with my friends is to do research in advance. I will either call or visit the restaurant to check whether it will be safe to eat. If that is not possible, I will always bring along my own snack or meal. If I don't feel comfortable eating at certain venues, I will ask my friends to change to a different restaurant that I am more comfortable with. In addition, I make sure that I always carry my auto-injector and that my friends are familiar with how to use it.</p>	<p>Going out with friends doesn't alter the way I handle my allergy. If I'm eating while I'm out with friends, I handle situations the same way I would if I were by myself. I check labels, and I ensure that I am avoiding any risk of a reaction. An allergy is nothing to be embarrassed of. Friends may taunt in a friendly manner—for example, "this peanut butter cup is SO delicious"—but people in general, and friends especially, are quite understanding of allergies.</p>	<p>Dealing with my food allergies while going out with friends is something I've gotten very used to and very good at. I'm very lucky my good friends are very understanding and watch out for me, which makes it easier and less embarrassing for me when I know I have them to stand up for me in a tough situation. My friends always ask me about safe places I can go to well in advance so it is safe for me. I've also seen my friends check labels without me even saying anything, or for their own food that I'm not going to touch. Going out to restaurants, events, or parties with my friends is definitely made easier for me because of their knowledge and understanding.</p>
<p>Question 3: What is one piece of advice you want to share with other teens with food allergies?</p>	<p>ALWAYS ask yourself this question: "Is it worth it?" Is this risk or intentional carelessness really worth your life? How valuable do you think you are? Sure you don't have to check with the waiter... It's probably safe. The food is likely to be fine... and you wouldn't want to go hungry. You don't want to seem rude by refusing that dessert... you can take the chance. But is it worth it? The second you put your life into the equation of decision making, almost any 'awkward' situation seems absolutely trivial. So, my advice to any teenager really, but especially those with food allergies, is that you should start seriously asking yourself that question.</p>	<p>If I could share something with other teens, it would be that food allergies are not the end of the world. As long as you take the necessary precautions, you can easily have fun with all your friends. Not only do food allergies allow you to raise awareness amongst your peers, they also allow you to make great friends. By taking part in Anaphylaxis Canada events or joining the Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) like I did, there are endless opportunities to get involved!</p>	<p>Be smart! Make educated decisions about where to eat, and what to eat. Most importantly however: always carry an EpiPen.</p>	<p>One piece of advice I'd share with other teens with food allergies would be that nothing is impossible. Just because you can't eat certain foods doesn't mean that should hold you back from doing anything you set your mind to.</p>

NEWS

Pet health: Arthritis is treatable

There is a wide range of treatment options available for treating arthritis (also known as osteoarthritis or degenerative joint disease).

Adequate rest: Pets with degenerative joint disease need adequate rest. Rest helps to decrease inflammation and strengthen joints. Too much exercise and over-use of the damaged joints will aggravate symptoms and may also accelerate joint destruction.

Unfortunately, it is often difficult to determine how much rest and exercise a pet needs.

Too much exercise may make matters worse while not enough may reduce muscle tone. Your veterinarian can assist you in determining how much exercise and rest is ideal for your pet. Rest is important in the acute phase when inflammation is active.

Avoid overexertion: As a guideline, any activity that causes your pet to become acutely lame for a period of time afterward is excessive and the level of activity should be reduced accordingly. Avoid strenuous exercise and periods of overexertion, which can accelerate the destruction within the joints.

Control exercise: Properly controlled exercise will help maintain muscle tone and joint flexibility. Failure to provide adequate exercise is just as bad as providing too much. Controlled exercise can consist of several short walks on a leash every day, interspersed with short periods of rest. Swimming, when possible, is another ideal form of exercise, providing exercise without stressing the joints.

As the pet strengthens, and if there are no adverse side effects (such as lameness, soreness, stiffness or reluctance to walk), periods of exercise can be lengthened and more strenuous types of activity introduced. If adverse effects do occur, the amount of exercise must be reduced accordingly. Once again, your veterinarian can prove very helpful in providing advice. In some regions now, passive physiotherapy, TENS and water treadmill exercises are available.

Weight reduction: Pets that are obese should be started on a weight-reduction program. Obesity places excessive stress on joints and may hasten further joint degeneration.

Pain relief: Currently, there are a number of treatments available to help dogs

with arthritis become pain-free and mobile once again. Nutritional supplements (e.g. glucosamine sulphate, chondroitin sulphate), corticosteroids, and NSAIDs (nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs), alone or in combination, may prove helpful. The introduction of new drugs such as Metacam™ (meloxicam) and Rimadyl™ (carprofen) have dramatically changed the way veterinarians treat arthritis. These new generation NSAIDs are proving to be extremely effective yet are well tolerated by patients over long periods of time. Your veterinarian can advise you on which treatments are best suited for your dog.

Surgery: Surgery is used only in very select cases. For example, occasionally, fusion of the joints may be warranted to help relieve pain or restore limited function. In other cases, insertion of a prosthetic device (e.g. hip joint) or removal of joint debris may also prove helpful. However, in some cases, surgical intervention is not a suitable alternative for the treatment of degenerative joint disease.

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THE AIR YOU BREATHE

Most of us take the air we breathe for granted.

However, air pollutants can become extremely dangerous to human health if concentrations become elevated, especially for people sensitive to air pollution, such as young children, people with respiratory illnesses, the elderly or those exposed for long periods of time.

Breathing in polluted air is especially known to aggravate asthma, precipitating or worsening an attack in people of all ages. Responses to breathing poor quality air may happen immediately or a few days after heavy exposure and include chest tightness, eye, nose and throat irritation, coughing and wheezing.

A whole new matter

Originally meaning a combination of smoke and fog, smog has recently come to refer to a combination of fine particulate matter (such as that produced by coal-burning electricity plants) and ground level ozone. It can contain other harmful components such as nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide. The colour of smog is determined by these suspended particles and is often brown or



deep grey, but can also be white.

Extending beyond city limits

Air quality is a problem in every region of Canada all year round and is not exclusive to urban areas. However, studies indicate that every major Canadian urban centre has levels of ambient particles high enough to pose health risks.

The AQHI helps you to make decisions that will protect you by limiting exposure to air pollution and allowing you to adjust your activity levels during increased level of air pollution.

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TAKE ACTION

Protect your health

- **Stay indoors** on high smog days.
- **Exercise indoors** or much later in the day if exercising outdoors.
- **Breathe through** your nose if you are outside during high smog situations.
- **Monitor your** asthma symptoms closely and talk to your doctor about having a written Asthma Action Plan that you can use if you

start to have asthma symptoms.

- **Download the** Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) Widget available at asthma.ca so that you will know the level of pollution in your area every day.

Read more on the web:
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Allergic to your pet? There are ways to cope

The most effective way to manage pet and other allergic rhinitis symptoms is to avoid the allergen(s) causing the symptoms.

Antihistamines and other over-the-counter allergy medications may help relieve symptoms, but they are not ideal as a long-term treatment.

If you have a pet allergy, talk to your allergist/immunologist about the potential for allergy shots (immunotherapy). Allergy shots have a proven track record as an effective form of long-term treatment.

Other ways to minimize pet allergy symptoms include:

Maintain personal space

→ Keeping pets out of your bedroom can reduce allergy symptoms since you spend about eight hours every day in this room, so can keeping your pet off of upholstered furniture.

Delegate grooming

→ Have someone who doesn't have allergies brush the pet regularly—outside, not indoors.

Get to the root

→ Talk to your vet about getting a well-balanced diet for your pet. This may help to minimize hair loss for the pet, which can reduce dander indoors.

Clean regularly

→ Use a double or micro-filter bag in the vacuum to reduce the amount of pet allergen present in carpeting that leaks back into the room air.

Choose the right filter

→ Use HEPA air cleaners, which can be a big help in removing unwanted allergenic particles from the air.

Strip it down

→ Remove carpeting and rugs, which can trap pet dander and other allergens.



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Recent data from McGill University shows that about **seven percent or approximately 2.5 million Canadians**, self-report at one least one food allergy.

Understanding your allergies

“While this is a significant number of Canadians, the impact is felt by many more, including family members, friends and teachers, just to mention a few,” says Dr. Susan Waserman, allergist and Professor of Medicine at McMaster University.

“Oral allergy syndrome is a condition where certain fruits, vegetables and tree nuts will cause a reaction.”

As of August 2012, the newest food to be added to Health Canada's list of priority allergens is mustard seed, she adds, which means it will now have to appear on food labels.

Oral allergy syndrome

Waserman is also seeing increasing numbers of patients who are experiencing symptoms to certain fresh foods and vegetables including kiwi, mango, peach, celery and carrot. These may be true food allergies, or an “oral allergy syndrome”.

Oral allergy syndrome is a condition where certain fruits, vegetables and tree nuts will cause a reaction mainly in the mouth area causing itching and swelling. This condition typically develops in adult hay fever sufferers who have pollen allergy, especially to birch tree and ragweed.

Patients with oral allergy syndrome can still enjoy their favourite fruits and vegetables if they cook them first.



“It's in the raw state that these foods generally cause problems,” Waserman explains.

Research trends

Many exciting research initiatives in food allergy are occurring. Some involve desensitizing sufferers to particular allergens, explains Dr Waserman. Clinical trials are planned for the peanut patch which has been developed by a French biotech com-

pany. The patch, which contains a small amount of peanut, is applied on the patient's skin. This appears to be a safer way of exposing the body's immune cells to peanut, in order to desensitize them.

A study by a British scientist, Dr Gideon Lack, is examining whether or not exposure to peanuts early in life can prevent the development of peanut allergy. Physicians used to recommend peanut avoidance to high-

risk infants. However, some studies suggest that children who eat peanut early on may actually be protected. The researchers are studying infants, aged 4-10 months old who are at higher risk of peanut allergy because of eczema and/or egg allergy. Half will be fed peanut, the other half will avoid it, and the two groups will be compared for peanut allergy.

The Canadian Healthy Infant Longitudinal Development (CHILD) Study

AllerGen (Allergy, Genes and the Environment), a Network of Centres of Excellence based at McMaster University, began a national study in 2009 of children born across Canada, to better investigate the link between the environment and children's health. The children will be followed until they are five years old. The focus will be on interactions, explains principal investigator Dr Malcolm Sears.

“This is a long-term, ambitious study because we are looking at a broad range of exposures that may cause allergic disorders like food allergy, eczema, hay fever and asthma. We are studying the mother during pregnancy, and will follow the infant through early childhood.”

More than 3,600 children have been enrolled. Unfortunately, enrollment was suspended earlier this year because of funding issues, but principal investigator Dr. Malcolm Sears is hopeful these will be resolved soon. CHILD hopes to study 5,000 children.

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Coping through immunotherapy

How did immunotherapy help your allergies?

I have suffered for years with seasonal allergies. Immunotherapy has helped by allowing me to be outside without suffering all of the allergy side effects such as itchy, running

eyes, sneezing and itchy throat.

How often do you receive your shots?

I receive a series of 9 needles for each of my allergies. I start my tree allergy needles in January, then grass needles in March and finally ragweed allergy

needles in June. That is a total of 27 needles from start to finish!

How has your allergy management routine changed?

I no longer need to take over the counter allergy medicine on a daily basis and my allergies seem to be very mild.



Meghan Corney
Allergy Sufferer

Health Care for Pets

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Shawn Van Daele, re Pedro, 12 year old mixed breed

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THE CHOW CHALLENGE
Don't take chances with your pet's diet. Ensure they are receiving all of the vital nutrients.



DON'T MISS!

Healthy skin is the first step to minimizing dander

Pets sometimes have unexplained bouts of dry skin and dandruff, but you can manage the symptoms through a few simple steps.

- Regular grooming and baths.
- If you have a lawn, keep it watered and mow it regularly to keep the grass short. Many dogs are sensitive to simple lawn grasses.
- Feed your pet a healthy diet, and give it plenty of filtered water to drink. If you feed dry commercial pet food, ensure that the first ingredient listed is meat such as beef, poultry, lamb or fish.
- Don't use pesticides in your home unless absolutely necessary.

“Don't use pesticides in your home unless absolutely necessary.”

When to see the vet

According to the American Animal Hospital Association, your pet's persistent scratching may indicate more than dry skin. See your veterinarian if your pet exhibits the following symptoms:

- Redness, rashes or bumps
- Open sores
- Excessive hair loss (patchy or all over)
- Dull, dry hair that easily falls or pulls out
- Constant foot-licking or face-rubbing (with or without runny eyes or itchy ears)

How can you reduce your allergic reaction to your pet?

According to Elaine Lindo, president of Animal Health Laboratories, changing your pet's diet can help reduce a person's allergic reaction to the animal. “It begins with their food. Most dogs and cats are eating processed food as their main diet. Nutrients that support healthy skin and coat, namely Omega fatty acids, also known as or EFA's (Essential Fatty Acids) and the antioxidant vitamins A and E, are fragile and breakdown easily with the heat and oxidation that occur in food processing. So, even with the best food, dogs and cats are often not getting an optimal amount of these nutrients,” she explains.

This is a primary cause of excessive shedding and dry flaky skin. Feeding your pet the appropriate supplements can lead to a dramatic reduction in the shedding of fur and dander, which in turn can make your pet much more tolerable to humans with dog and cat allergies, Lindo adds.

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Nourish your pet for lifelong health

Question: Why is it vital to ensure your pet's diet is nutritionally well-balanced?

Answer: Ensuring your animal receives the required nutrients has a positive impact on their teeth, eyes and coat—and can reduce allergens.

Your pet's balanced diet consists of plenty of clean, fresh water, protein, fats, minerals, vitamins and carbohydrates.

However veterinarians are seeing far too many dogs and cats that are overfed and yet under-nourished, according to Adronie Verbrugghe, professor and chair of Canine and Feline Nutrition at the Ontario Veterinarian College.

Pets that are fed on home-made diets don't fare too well either, she adds. In fact, many fare worse. “One of the main concerns is insufficient calcium, leading to bone demineralization,” She says. She also recalls treating a dog that was so calcium deficient that it developed “rubber jaws”.



Pets that are fed home-made diets will require added vitamins and minerals, but “I would recommend that they go to their vet for access to appropriate recipes,” Verbrugghe adds.

Dry vs. canned/wet food

Both dry and wet foods can provide the same level of nutrition. Dry food generally costs less per serving, stays fresh when left in a bowl all day, and requires less space to store. Feeding

dry food may also keep your pet's teeth cleaner.

A lot of commercial diets already contain the necessary nutrients that are appropriate for the breed. Feeding a pet a commercially prepared diet is not the same as consuming processed foods for humans, explains Verbrugghe. For one thing, these are preparations that are tailored to the breed and manufactured with the appropriate amount of nutrients, minerals, and vitamins. She doesn't recommend giving your pet additional supplements especially if they are already on a quality commercial diet, as this could lead to over-dosing on certain vitamins and minerals, but if your pet is being fed a home cooked diet, then supplementation becomes important.

Finally, ensure that your pet is getting sufficient exercise. “Under-exercising is a big issue, and a major cause of obesity in pets,” Verbrugghe adds.

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Advocate for your pet's health

Bringing home a new puppy or kitten is certainly a wonderful time in a pet owner's life.

Those first few months are full of wonderful, lasting memories. But before you know it, that cute little pet will quickly start to grow. That's the time when you need to plan your spay or neuter appointment.

A cat or dog may be able to successfully reproduce by the time they are six months old. The ideal age to spay or neuter is generally recommended between four to six months old or before their first heat cycle. A licensed veterinarian does the procedure, and it is considered a routine surgery. It is completely painless for the pet, as they are under general anesthesia and sleeping during the entire operation. There is minimal aftercare and your pet will be back to his or her lovable self right away.

A fighting chance

There are a variety of health benefits



TAKE INITIATIVE: Spaying or neutering your pet contributes greatly to decreasing the amount of unwanted animals in shelters. PHOTO: OSPCA

to a spayed or neutered pet, including a vast reduction in developing various reproductive problems and illnesses that many pets are prone to later in life. By spaying or neutering your pet, owners are collectively preventing hundreds of thousands of unwanted cats and dogs, many of which end up at shelters, neglected and abandoned

by their owners.

The Ontario SPCA opened two high volume spay and neuter clinics in Newmarket and Barrie, Ontario. These clinics, together, have provided over 25,000 surgeries since their inception in 2009. Recently the Barrie Clinic celebrated their 10,000th surgery! Their services are available to all

pets, regardless of the owner's geographical location or income level. Pet owners are encouraged to call their local SPCA branch to learn more about the procedure and its costs.

Benefiting your health and theirs

Owning a new pet can be both exciting and rewarding, but important healthcare issues such as spaying or neutering should not be ignored. It is a great opportunity to provide your pet with the longest, healthiest life they can possibly have and you can help us to reduce the heartbreaking pet overpopulation by being part of the solution.

To learn more about the importance of having your pet spayed or neutered please visit fixyourpet.ca. It's the kindest thing you can do.

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INSIGHT

Dr. Michael Alexander

FRCPC

AWARENESS



Allergy sufferers are all too familiar with battling symptoms—runny noses, severe sniffles and watery eyes. **However, there's an alternative to carrying around a box of tissues—immunotherapy addresses allergies at the source through desensitization methods.**

The ins and outs of immunology

■ **How does immunotherapy affect the body's reaction to the most common allergens such as grass, dust mite, cats and dogs and mold?**

Allergens such as grass pollen etc. can cause an allergic reaction inside the nose causing inflammation of the tissues and resulting in sneezing, itching, runny nose and congestion. It can be associated with allergic conjunctivitis which is a similar allergic reaction in the eyes.

Allergic Rhinitis has a significant impact on patients' social lives, as it may worsen their health-related quality of life, may impair their sleep, cognitive functions, work and school performance, may lead to significant economic costs for the affected patient and family. The inflammation of Allergic Rhinoconjunctivitis can be part of a larger inflammatory process that affects the lungs, ears, and other organs.

In children it can cause learning problems and sleep-related disorders, such as obstructive sleep apnea syndrome, chronic and acute sinusitis, acute otitis media, serous otitis media, aggravation of adenoidal hypertrophy, and asthma.

Traditionally doctors provide their allergic patients treatments which consist of patient education, allergen avoidance (when possible), pharmacotherapy for symptom relief and allergen-specific immunotherapy.

Commonly known as shots, allergen-specific immunotherapy consists of a solution containing one or more modified allergens, that the patient is allergic to, and is administered subcutaneously over many weeks.

The dose is increased incrementally and once it reaches a maintenance dose the frequency decreases to monthly injections. The duration and dose administered is crucial to achieve efficacy.

This treatment results in reduction of symptoms and/or usage of medications; improvement in patient's quality of life. It is the only curative treatment of allergic rhinoconjunctivitis.

Overall allergen immunotherapy induces tolerance to the offending allergen by multiple immunological mechanisms; including altering the body's antibodies to the allergic inflammation, changing the responses of lymphocytes (member of the white blood cell family) and dampening down the overall allergic inflammatory reaction.

■ **What are the benefits of immunotherapy?**

■ Significant improvement in allergic symptoms and significant reduction in using over the counter antihistamines, eye drops and prescrip-



A SEASON OF SNIFFLES
August to September tends to be peak season for allergy sufferers.

tion drugs.

■ In clinical research, studies with antihistamines are better than placebo by more than 12 percent.

■ In clinical research trials, nasal steroids used as preventative treatment are better than placebo by 14-20 percent.

■ Allergy immunotherapy improves symptoms by over 26 percent.

It has powerful anti symptomatic effect starting as early as the first season after treatment onset, as shown in a recent study. Overall improvement was shown in quality of life: increased participation in outdoor activities, sports etc., as well as quality of sleep and less daytime fatigue.

It can also result in marked improvement and in some patients change the natural course of the disease.

In recent clinical trials, there is the potential of preventing the progression from allergic rhinitis to asthma. Some studies have shown that in allergy immunotherapy can reduce asthma symptoms and use of asthma medications.

■ **How does it work?**

There is up regulation of blocking antibody responses and down regulation of allergen specific IgE responses. IgE is the antibody that is responsible for the allergic reaction between the allergen (pollen/cat /yellow jacket) and the patient's tissues. T cells (class of lymphocytes) responses and reduction in the numbers and activation of proinflammatory cells (mast cells and eosinophils) are altered allowing the allergen to be tolerated by the patient's body. This results in decrease in the sensitivity of the patient's end organs.

■ **How do you know if immunotherapy is right for you?**

The allergist should discuss the treatment options. If the offending allergen is an animal (e.g. cats), simply removing it from your home can result in improvement.

However, it is difficult to remove tree, grass and ragweed pollen / moulds. The amount of treatment required, concomitant side effects and costs are all factors to be considered.

Allergy immunotherapy is time

consuming, takes place at a doctor's office and can be inconvenient for many working patients.

There are side effects to be considered, the most serious being a severe allergic reaction and for that reason it should be administered in a medical clinic.

■ **What is the difference between seasonal and pre-seasonal allergies?**

Allergy symptoms, in the eyes and upper respiratory system, can occur during the Spring, Summer or Fall depending on which allergen the patient is allergic to (e.g. ragweed). Allergy sufferers experience symptoms from mid August to the end of September.

Other allergens such as house dust mite can provoke symptoms in the late Fall and Winter.

Many patients have allergic symptoms to one or more allergens.

If the symptoms occur all year round then it is called perennial allergic rhinoconjunctivitis.

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DON'T MISS!

It's the season for allergens and irritants

The term allergy refers very specifically to an immune-mediated adverse response to an otherwise harmless exposure (e.g. pollen, cat allergens, mold spores, dust mite allergens, foods, latex).

Allergens are almost always proteins, and there are many other bothersome irritants which are not allergens that not trigger a true allergic response (e.g. cigarette smoke, most pollutants, noxious odors such as perfumes, etc.). None of these result in an immune-mediated response, and are therefore not allergies.

Mark your calendars

A person with environmental allergies will typically experience very consistent, reproducible symptoms when exposed to their particular trigger in sufficient quantity. For example, a person with birch pollen allergies will typically begin to notice nasal congestion, itching, runny nose, and sneezing, along with eye symptoms at the start of the typical tree pollen season. Many of the symptoms of hay fever (seasonal allergic rhinitis) look and feel similar to a cold, although the itching and eye symptoms are certainly more typical of allergies than many viruses. A person with seasonal allergies may suffer through a couple of years or more of consistent symptoms before realizing that they always get a longer-than-usual lasting cold at the same time of year.

Under the influence

People with pollen allergies typically notice more symptoms with outdoor activities, and may find themselves avoiding these as a result, which is not necessarily the best way to manage this problem.

Untreated allergic rhinitis can lead to poor sleep quality, sinus pressure and sinus infections, headaches, plugged ears and ear infections, fatigue, decreased sense of smell and taste, and significantly impaired quality of life. School and work performance can suffer, and there are evidence that students with grass pollen (late spring) allergies perform substantially worse on their end-of-year exams compared to their mid-term (winter) exams.

Complicating matters

Also, as many as 30 to 40 percent of people with allergic rhinitis will also have asthma, and some with seasonal allergies will develop seasonal asthma, with wheezing, coughing, and difficulty breathing. There is a well-known phenomenon of "thunderstorm asthma", where grass pollen hay fever sufferers develop sudden asthma attacks during violent summer thunderstorms which seem to break up the pollen and make it more easily inhaled into the lungs.



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