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Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
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Ask the Expert: Allergy Q & A with Dr. Harold Kim

By News Canada

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(NC)– What is an allergy?

An allergy is a super-sensitivity to a substance that is not harmful to most other people. These substances are called allergens. The common allergens include pollen, mould, dust mites, cockroaches and pet dander. Some people also have food allergies. Some people have symptoms with strong chemical fumes, odours (including perfumes, fragrances in household cleaners and detergents), smoke and air pollution. These compounds are chemical irritants and not true allergens. The common symptoms of allergy include hay fever, asthma, eczema or food reactions.

How do I know if I have allergies?

Hay fever is the most common allergy problem in Canada. The typical symptoms of hay fever are sneezing, a stuffy or runny nose, watery eyes, a dry cough and itching. Asthma is a lung condition which can lead to shortness of breath, wheezing or coughing. Eczema is a skin condition which often involves a dry itchy rash. True food allergy reactions can include hives, itchiness, shortness of breath, throat tightness, lightheadedness or stomach pain after eating the food allergen. Allergies can be a serious medical condition and you should consult your doctor if you suspect you have them. A doctor may recommend allergy scratch tests (a type of skin testing in which suspected allergens are applied to the skin, scratched and observed for a reaction in 15 minutes). Skin tests should always be done under the supervision of a qualified physician with an expertise in allergy.

How are allergies treated?

The first step in an effective allergy treatment plan is to make some simple lifestyle changes that will limit your exposure to allergens. I would suggest having allergy scratch tests done before any major lifestyle changes are made. After the allergy scratch tests you will know the likely causes of the allergy symptoms. One can avoid pollen by keeping windows closed and air conditioning on during the

high-pollen seasons. Most of the mould that causes allergies is from the outdoors. Therefore, keeping the windows closed is helpful. If you notice mould in the house it should be cleaned with diluted bleach. The best ways of avoiding dust mites are to purchase proper dust mite proof pillows and mattress covers, remove carpet from the bedroom, wash the bedding in hot water and to keep the humidity around 40 percent. Vacuuming and duct cleaning are actually not very effective at removing dust mites. The only way to remove pet allergens completely from the home is to keep the pet outdoors or to give the pet away. By keeping pets out of the bedroom, washing pets weekly and removing carpets from the bedroom, you can decrease your total pet allergen exposure. If you have a true food allergy, that food should be completely avoided.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist about which medications would help you manage your allergy symptoms. Antihistamines are the most common medications used to treat hay fever. Antihistamines block the action of histamine released by the immune system and are effective at reducing sneezing, runny nose and itchy, watery eyes. They are particularly effective at relieving the symptoms of

seasonal hay fever and should be taken as soon as an allergy attack develops. You may also need a decongestant to reduce nasal congestion. Some antihistamines can cause side effects such as drowsiness and they should be avoided if you have to drive, work or perform tasks that require you to be alert. There are several websites offering good information on allergies, for example, visit

Dr. Harold Kim is an allergy specialist based in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario.

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Duck Allergy, An Introduction

By Charlene J. Nuble

There are some people who are fond of eating duck meat. Duck meat can be turned into several delectable delicacies and there are a rising number of countries around the world that are somehow turning into consuming such meat.

Admit it or not, though duck dishes are not as popular as their chicken, lamb or beef counterparts, many people prefer them because of the somehow good and appetizing aroma and the satisfying aftertaste that comes with it.

Chefs and food critics also claim that duck meats are undoubtedly more meaty than chicken, and flavors tend to stick more into duck meat than into any other form of animal meat.

Whatever argument you are taking regarding duck meat, you still can not change the fact that ducks meats are becoming popular, be it on exotic or regular menus.

Duck allergy

There are some setbacks, however, to eating duck meat. Because duck belongs to the family of chicken and turkey, there a number of people who have duck allergy.

People with duck allergy may or may not know about the condition until they have eaten duck meat and symptoms of duck allergy begin to manifest.

Because people eating duck is relatively and comparatively few in number compared to vegetarians and people consuming pork, beef, lamb and chicken, statistics show that there are only a few recorded and reported cases of duck allergy.

There are other people who have duck allergy and also develop allergy to duck eggs. Just like in the case for chicken allergy, some duck allergic people do not exhibit symptoms to duck egg allergy.

Symptoms of duck allergy

Symptoms of duck allergy are somehow similar to symptoms of chicken allergy.

Duck allergy attacks are characterized by asthma attacks, eczema, unusual fatigue, insomnia, depression and chronic disturbance of the gastrointestinal system.

Unusual symptoms of duck allergy may also appear like bed-wetting and infections particularly in the bladder and in the ears. Migraine coming along with other symptoms may also be expected.

Sinusitis can also observed in people with duck allergy especially during duck allergy attacks.

Be aware that the manifestations of duck allergy attacks may occur and show up hours or even about one to days after taking in or eating duck meat.

Treating and preventing duck allergy

As usual, antihistamines are prescribed to people exhibiting apparent indications or manifestations of duck meat allergy. It is important to note, however, that antihistamines should not be taken without proper prescription as it may lead to over dosage and other serious medical conditions.

Antihistamines contain substances and anti-allergic enzymes that can pose adverse and irreversible side effects to people who take inappropriate dosages.

People with duck allergy, above all things, should also eliminate duck meat in their daily diet. Duck allergic people should do so immediately if the symptoms of duck allergy are already exhibiting or showing up. Doing so would certainly stop the prevalence or occurrence of such manifestations.

To avoid the onset of duck allergy, it is also imperative that people with duck allergy permanently and religiously eliminate duck meat in their diet. The reason behind is very logical and practical, don't you think?

Donald Duck is so cute, and you may probably have loved him one time or another during your growing up years. But ducks around can never be always fun, especially when you want to eat them and you have duck allergy.

Charlene J. Nuble 2006. For answers to All your frequently asked questions about duck allergy, please go to:

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