



Dedham Medical
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Atrius Health

Spring Tips For Parents

Spring Tips from Jennifer K. Fehser, M.D. and the American
Academy of Pediatrics (AAP):

'Tis Pollen Season

An allergy is an overreaction of the immune system to a substance that is harmless to most people. Allergies are quite common (perhaps as many as 20% of people are affected), and they often begin in childhood.

Allergic rhinitis refers to inflammation of the nasal passages; symptoms may include watery nasal discharge, nasal congestion, sneezing, nasal itching, post-nasal drip, loss of taste, and facial pressure or pain. Fatigue, poor sleep, sore throat, and coughing are also frequent symptoms of allergies. Itchy, watery, uncomfortable, or red eyes suggest that allergic conjunctivitis may also be present. Allergies are often associated with and/or can trigger asthma, resulting in wheezing and shortness of breath.

Allergies can either be seasonal or perennial (year-round). The allergens that frequently cause seasonal allergic rhinitis include pollens from grasses, weeds, and trees, as well as spores from fungi and molds. Dust mites, cockroaches, animal dander, and fungi or molds are common causes of perennial allergies.

There are several classes of medications that aid in treatment of allergies. Antihistamines and/or prescription nasal steroids are often prescribed to help alleviate symptoms. There are other classes of medications and eye drops that can also be used, depending on the particular situation. We recommend that you consult with your pediatrician to discuss any medical concerns and to determine the treatment regimen that is best for your child.

In addition to medical management, it is important to limit exposure to allergens as much as possible. If your child has seasonal allergies, the following measures can help lessen symptoms: keep windows and doors closed in your home during peak pollen season; use an air conditioner (with vent closed) in cars and at home; change your child's clothing after being outdoors; avoid prolonged periods outside on dry, windy days during peak pollen season; and shower or bathe at night to remove pollens and spores from skin and hair.

If your child suffers from year-round allergies, the following tips may be helpful: do not smoke or let anybody smoke in your home or car; keep family pets out of certain rooms, particularly bedrooms; remove carpets, rugs, and heavy drapes from your child's room; wash bed sheets weekly in hot water; use special allergy-proof casings to seal pillows and mattresses; and control humidity, particularly in basements, bathrooms, and other mold-prone areas.

When medical treatment of allergies is unsuccessful, when allergies are particularly severe, or when we are unsure what a patient's particular allergic triggers are, we will frequently refer to an Allergist for further testing and management. Fortunately, allergy skin testing has become more "kid friendly" in the last year or two. In severe cases, immunotherapy (allergy shots) may be recommended.

Spring Safety Tips

Consider a Spring “safety check”, with these tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

- ◆ Choose nontoxic products for your spring cleaning, including nontoxic cleaners, fertilizers, insecticides, and gardening supplies.
- ◆ Time to move the furniture? Place cribs, playpens and other furniture away from the window and accessible drapery cords. Children can climb up on furniture and fall out of the window or get strangled in the cords.
- ◆ Make sure window guards/bars are secure. Screens do not prevent window falls.
- ◆ Test all of your smoke alarms to ensure they are working. Consider installing a carbon monoxide alarm.
- ◆ Develop and practice a family fire escape plan in case of emergency.
- ◆ Make sure small parts, plastic bags, small toys, balloons or any other choking hazards are out of reach of young children in your home and yard.
- ◆ Check your home for recalled and banned children's products. To find out about recalled products, go to www.recalls.gov.
- ◆ Post the Poison Help Line number (1-800-222-1222) and your pediatrician's number on all phones.
- ◆ Eliminate any standing water to prevent drowning (buckets, drums, baby pools). Remember that a young child can drown in only a few inches of water.
- ◆ If you have a pool or spa, it should be enclosed by a four-sided fence with a self-closing and self-latching gate. Learn CPR and have a phone and emergency equipment poolside.

Spring Sports Injury Prevention

All children should aim for at least an hour of good physical activity daily. Sports help children and adolescents keep fit and boost self-esteem.

Injury Risks

All sports have a risk of injury. Most injuries occur to ligaments, tendons and muscles. Only about 5 percent of sports injuries involve broken bones. Most frequent sports injuries are sprains (injuries to ligaments) and strains (injuries to muscles). In a growing child, point tenderness over a bone should be evaluated further by a medical provider even if minimal swelling or limitation in motion is appreciated. As always, contact your pediatrician if you have particular questions or concerns.

To reduce injury:

- ◆ **Wear the right gear.** Players should wear appropriate protective equipment such as pads (neck, shoulder, elbow, chest, knee, shin), helmets, mouthpieces, face guards, protective cups, and/or eyewear.
- ◆ **Increase flexibility.** Stretching exercises before and after games can increase flexibility.
- ◆ **Strengthen muscles.** Conditioning exercises during practice and before games strengthens muscles used in play.
- ◆ **Use the proper technique.** This should be reinforced during the playing season.
- ◆ **Take breaks.** Rest periods during practice and games can reduce injuries and prevent heat illness.
- ◆ **Play safe.** Strict rules against headfirst sliding (baseball and softball), spearing (football), and body checking (ice hockey) should be enforced.
- ◆ **Stop the activity** if there is pain.
- ◆ **Avoid heat injury** by drinking plenty of fluids before, during and after exercise or play; decrease or stop practices or competitions during high heat/humidity periods; wear light clothing.

Sports-Related Emotional Stress

The pressure to win can cause significant emotional stress for a child. Young athletes should be judged on effort, sportsmanship, and hard work and should not be punished or criticized for losing a game or competition. Children should be rewarded for trying hard and having fun.

The safety tips above are recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).



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