

Is It Allergies or Asthma?

Asthma and allergies are closely connected. Most people who have asthma also have allergies, and many people, especially children, who have allergies also have asthma. Allergy-induced asthma is the most common type of asthma in the United States. Anyone who has allergies, or whose parents or siblings have allergies, are known to be at a much higher risk for developing asthma than people with no allergy history.

What Is the Link Between Allergies and Asthma?

Allergies can trigger or induce asthma. For people with allergic asthma, breathing in substances such as pollen, mold, dust mites, and animal dander can trigger the inflammation and swelling of the airways, leading to symptoms of asthma.

Common Asthma Symptoms

- Shortness of breath – the inability to draw in a breath of air.
- Chest tightness – the feeling that a steel band or weight is keeping the lungs from fully expanding.
- Wheezing – a whistling sound heard when a person with asthma breathes in or out. Wheezing may be worse at bedtime or first thing in the morning.
- Frequent cough – a chronic, frequent cough that may wake a person at night could be a symptom of asthma.
- Whitish or bluish color in the lips and face – signs of a serious lack of oxygen.
- Anxiety – a feeling of intense fear and uneasiness that occurs when a person has trouble breathing.

Common Allergy Symptoms

- Rash
- Symptoms associated with a season (such as spring) or a trigger (such as a cat or dust)
- Frequent sneezing
- Itchy watery nose and eyes
- Allergic rhinitis (commonly called hay fever)
- Allergic conjunctivitis (also called pink eye)
- Reactions to certain foods or to a specific food ingredient (such as milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, fish, or shellfish)

Treatment

The treatment goal for both allergies and asthma is to prevent the symptoms from occurring. This involves knowing the “triggers” and learning to avoid the allergen. (An allergen is anything that causes a reaction: pollen, pet dander, dust mites, mold, smoke, foods, medications, chemicals, etc.) Treatment of both involves preventative environmental measures such as “allergy-proofing” the environment with dust covers for mattresses, thoroughly cleaning and vacuuming, dust control, and washing hard and soft surfaces often.

For people with asthma, treatment also includes following an asthma action plan. An asthma action plan is an outline for monitoring symptoms, for medication use, and a plan of action for medical attention if an asthma attack were to occur.



For more information visit the following websites:

http://www.medicinenet.com/allergy_treatment_begins_at_home/article.htm
<http://www.lungusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=dvLUK900E&b=33276>