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5 Tips for Dealing with Fall Allergies

(originally posted on blog.allergybegone.com)

It's a well known fact that the worst part of allergy season is in the spring. I mean, that's when the plants the most pollen, isn't it? Well, spring may be the start of the allergy season, but it's only the beginning. Many people find their allergies are actually worse in the fall.

Why the fall? You would think that most plants were finished with their pollinating by the time September rolls around. And most are. But not ragweed, which hits its stride in the fall and continues until the end of allergy season in October.

So, if you're still suffering from intense allergies (or maybe just started), we've put together a few quick Fall allergy tips:

1. Find out when the allergy season end in your area. In most places it's October, but global warming (and regional differences) means it varies from place to place
2. Don't discontinue your anti-allergy regimen just because the leaves are coming off the trees. If you're taking medication, keep taking it until you know the season is over. Ragweed (not to mention indoor allergies) can still pack a wallop. Allergy medications are safe to take all the time, even when there are no allergens present.
3. Fall may get too chilly for the air conditioner, but keeping the windows closed still keeps out that annoying pollen.
4. You're never too old to develop allergies. If the fall leaves you with a runny nose and watery eyes it may not be a cold, check with your doctor or an allergist, no matter what your age is.
5. Remember our pollen avoidance tips from the spring. Many of them apply to fall allergies as well.

Do you suffer from fall allergies, or have any allergy avoidance tips? Let us know in the comments.

The Dangerous Things Lurking in Your Water

(originally posted on blog.allergybegone.com)

For the next two weeks or so I'm going to talk about water quality and water purification - pretty much everything to do with water. Water is important in the summer, and having clean water is even more important. Part 1 deals with water pollution.

Water is one of the essential components of life. Almost 2/3 of the human body is made up of water, and without it our bodies can't function. It's very important to stay hydrated, especially when the weather turns hot.

Most people can just turn a tap and get fresh, clean water right from their kitchen sink. But with industries dumping approximately 200 million pounds of toxic chemicals into the waterways every year, how clean is the water that comes out of your faucet? While tap water in the U.S. has to follow certain standards, the government only regulates about 100 chemicals out of thousands, and even those

limits are sometimes exceeded.

If you want to find out more about the quality of your water, you can start by looking at the EPA's Drinking Water Database. You can also purchase a water test kit and conduct a test of your own drinking water. These kits are quick and easy to use.

Water pollutants can be broken down into three broad categories: toxic chemicals, infectious agents, and heavy metals.

Toxic chemicals, such as pesticides, and even traces of rocket fuel are often found in water. The most common chemical is chlorine, which is added to drinking water to kill bacteria. While it kills many microorganisms, it also interacts with organic material in the water and in your body, forming toxic compounds called THMs that cause cell damage and encourage cancer.

Infectious agents in the water include viruses, bacteria, and other microorganisms. Some of these organisms are highly resistant to chlorine. You might hear them called microbial cysts. This is just a term for a dormant stage of a microorganism. One such organism found in water is Cryptosporidium, which made thousands of people ill during an outbreak in 1993. Cryptosporidium has been found in over 50% of municipal water supplies across the U.S.

Heavy metals are another problem. Lead, mercury, and iron oxide from rusty pipes can easily get into water. Drinking water is one of the leading sources of lead poisoning, causing damage to the brain and nervous system. Another toxic heavy metal found in water is arsenic. While the EPA regulates it, many states go over the acceptable limit.

Now that we've outlined the harmful things that might be lurking in your water, we'll go over what you can do to combat them in Part 2.

What to Do When Your Water Quality Stinks

(originally posted on blog.allergybegone.com)

Last week I talked about the different types of pollution, be it chemical or biological, that could be lurking in your pipes. This week, I'm going to tell you what you can do about it.

If you want to filter your tap water, and I believe that you should, there are a lot of options out there. Here's the run-down on the different types of water filters.

Pitcher - Good for drinking only; low volume
Pros:

- Relatively inexpensive
- Come in a wide range of styles so they fit your decor
- Require absolutely no installation

Cons:

- Take up space in your refrigerator
- Must be refilled constantly
- Require frequent filter replacement
- Cannot be customized

On-tap / faucet - Good mostly for drinking and occasional other uses; medium-low volume
Pros:

- Relatively inexpensive
- Come in a wide range of styles so they fit your decor
- Minimal installation
- Take up very little space

Cons:

- Require frequent filter replacement
- Cannot be customized

Countertop - Good for drinking and other uses (washing dishes or hands, etc.); larger volume
Pros:

- Relatively inexpensive
- Minimal installation
- Can be customized for to filter out specific pollutants
- Larger filter does not have to be changed as often
- Can be staged (e.g. lead -> chlorine -> sediment -> general)

Cons:

- Take up counter space
- No designer styles

Undercounter - When you want water for everything; large volume
Pros:

- Hidden under kitchen counter to save counter space
- Can be customized for to filter out specific pollutants
- Larger filter does not have to be changed as often
- Can be staged (e.g. lead -> chlorine -> sediment -> general)

Cons:

- Requires installation
- Somewhat expensive

Whole house - When you have doubts about your water quality; largest volume
Pros:

- Completely out of sight; takes up little space in your kitchen
- Customizable to your needs

Cons:

- Requires installation by a plumber
- Most expensive option

In addition to a drinking water filter, you might want to consider a shower filter. In a warm shower, your pores open up, allowing you to more rapidly absorb harmful chemicals from the water. An American Journal Of Public Health study showed that 2/3 of our exposure to harmful water comes while showering. Also, since chlorine vaporizes at a lower temperature and a faster rate than water, the steam you inhale while showering has a highly concentrated amount of chlorine vapor. The EPA says that there is an elevated level of chlorine gas in nearly every American home because of the level of chlorine in our shower water.

Unfortunately, most of us live with bad water, it's not something a lot of people talk about. Doing something about it by using a water filter can be a great benefit to your health.