

# The Newsladder

## *It's Allergy Season, Are you Ready?*

### **What is a Seasonal Allergy?**

A seasonal allergy is an allergic reaction to a trigger that is typically only present for part of a year, such as spring or fall. This type of allergy refers to a pollen allergy, such as trees, weeds and grasses. Perennial allergies, on the other hand, are usually present year-round, and include allergens such as pet dander and house dust mites. Molds can be a seasonal or perennial allergy trigger.



### **What are Pollens?**

Pollens are tiny egg-shaped powdery grains released from flowering plants, which are carried by the wind or insects, and serve to cross-pollinate other plants of the same type for reproductive purposes. When pollen is present in the air, it can land in a person's eyes, nose, lungs and skin to set up an allergic reaction. Symptoms may include allergic rhinitis (hay fever), allergic conjunctivitis (eye allergies) and allergic asthma.

Pollens that are spread by the wind are usually the main cause of seasonal allergies, while pollens that rely on insects (such as the honeybee) to be carried to other plants do not. Pollen can travel long distances and the levels in the air can vary from day to day. The pollen level can be quite different in various areas of a particular city or area. Levels of pollen tend to be highest from early morning to mid-morning, from 5 to 10 A.M.



### **What Causes Springtime Allergies?**

Spring allergies are a result of pollen from trees, which can start pollinating anytime from January to April, depending on the climate and location. Trees that are known to cause severe allergies include oak, olive, elm, birch, ash, hickory, poplar, sycamore,

maple, cypress and walnut.

In some areas of the world, some weeds will also pollinate in the springtime.

### **How Do I Know Which Pollens I am Allergic To?**

An allergist can help determine if you have seasonal allergies, and to which types of pollens to which you are allergic. This is accomplished through allergy testing, which typically involves skin testing or a blood test (RAST). Allergy testing can be helpful in predicting the times of the year that you are likely to experience allergy symptoms, and is needed if you are interesting in taking allergy shots.

### **How Can I Avoid Pollen Exposure?**

Unlike avoidance of pet dander and dust mites, it is more difficult to avoid exposure to pollens, since it is present in the outdoor air. Here are some tips to minimize pollen exposure:

- Keep windows closed to prevent pollens from drifting into your home
- Minimize early morning activity when pollen is usually emitted-between 5-10 A.M.
- Keep your car windows closed when traveling
- Stay indoors when the pollen count is reported to be high, and on windy days when pollen may be present in higher amounts in the air
- Take a vacation during the height of the pollen season to a more pollen-free area, such as the beach or sea
- Avoid mowing the lawn and freshly cut grass
- Machine dry bedding and clothing. Pollen may collect in laundry if it is hung outside to dry

## Help Prevent Slips and Falls in your Home

In 2005, falls in the home and community caused or led to 19,656 deaths. All age groups are vulnerable but older adults are most at risk. In fact, 80% of those receiving fatal injury are over the age of 65. Falls continue to be the major reason for injury-related death, injury and hospital admission for older adults.

Follow these tips to prevent slips and falls in your home:

- Keep the floor clear. Reduce clutter and safely tuck telephone and electrical cords out of walkways.
- Keep the floor clean. Clean up grease, water and other liquids immediately. Don't wax floors.
- Use non-skid throw rugs to reduce your chance of slipping on linoleum.
- Install handrails in stairways. Have grab bars in the bathroom (by toilets and in tub/shower.)
- Make sure living areas are well lit. We can all trip and fall in the dark.
- Be aware that climbing and reaching high places will increase your chance of a fall. Use a sturdy step stool with hand rails when these tasks are necessary.
- Follow medication dosages closely. Using medication incorrectly may lead to dizziness, weakness and other side effects. These can all lead to a dangerous fall.

### Five Ways to Prevent a Fall

- Clean up! Remove clutter and boxes, especially from stairs and high-traffic areas. Clean up spills immediately.
- Re-route obstructing electrical cords.
- Fill holes and depressions around your property.
- Read the instructions for proper use of ladders, step stools and other household equipment.
- Replace old light bulbs. But always use the appropriate wattage listed.

### Guard Against Slips & Trips with this Fall Prevention Quiz

1) In 2002, how many people died as a result of a fall?

1. 1,000
2. 5,100
3. 14,500

**Answer:** 3. According to the National Safety Council, only motor-vehicle crashes and poisoning cause more unintentional injury (accidental) deaths. One in five visitors to a hospital emergency room for an injury is there because

of a fall.

2) What percentage of falls occur at home?

1. 10%
2. 25%
3. over 50%

**Answer:** 3. So says NSC publication, Injury Facts®. Since more time is spent at home than anywhere else, that's where falls are more likely to occur, especially if steps are not taken to reduce the risk.

3) True or False? Most fatalities resulting from falls involve sporting events like mountain climbing or parachuting.

**Answer:** False. Fewer than 4 percent of falling fatalities involve sports. According to the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC), more people died as a result of tripping on a level surface than in mountain climbing.

4) What accounts for the most falls that result in death?

1. Ladders
2. Stairs and steps
3. Slippery tile

**Answer:** 2. More falling deaths result from stairs and steps, according to the CPSC. Beds rate second, while ladders are in third place.

To reduce injuries on stairs and steps, consider these modifications:

- § Make sure stair height and tread widths are adequate, and each step is identical in size.
- § Install a second handrail if the stairs are wide enough.
- § Install light switches at the top and bottom of stairs.
- § Be sure carpeting is tightly woven and installed so it doesn't move or slide.

5) If you're over 65, what are your chances of falling?

1. 1 in 20
2. 1 in 5
3. 1 in 3

**Answer:** 3. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), seniors have a 33 percent chance of falling in any year. Older adults are five times more likely to be hospitalized for a fall-related injury than for other injury-

related reasons.

6) True or False? Seniors account for substantially more falling injuries than children.

**Answer:** False. The NSC publication, Injury Facts® indicates there were 11,081,000 falling injuries. Of this total, seniors age 65 and older account for 2,459,000, and children under 12 account for 2,173,000.

Other fall-prevention tactics include:

- § Supervise babies on beds and changing tables, and buckle them into high chairs and strollers.
- § Make porches, balconies and fire escapes off limits. Use safety gates.
- § Become familiar with window safety information.
- § Space pickets on stair rails 4 inches or less apart to prevent infants from slipping through.

7) True or False? You should have your hearing checked annually to prevent a fall.

**Answer:** True. Hearing plays an important role in balance and space perception. You should also have your eyes checked regularly.

8) True or False? Depression causes people to fall more often.

**Answer:** False. However, some medications used to treat depression and other diseases can leave people dizzy or disoriented and more susceptible to falls. Review your medications with your doctor to see if they cause balance problems.

### What's Your Score?

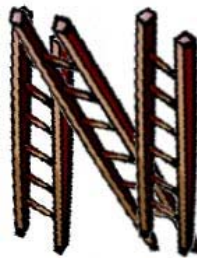
- § 6 to 8 correct: Standing tall!
- § 4 to 5: Have a good grip
- § 2 to 3: On shaky ground
- § 0 to 1: Falling down

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Airport Fire Training



Firefighters were among those working on the Extreme Makeover house



To the left: New Deputy Chiefs Roberts and Gatlin flank Chief Dick  
Below: The Department welcomes six new firefighters in February 26 ceremony

