

Respiratory Awareness

April is the fourth month. Keep your umbrella handy, because it's usually a rainy month. That's good, because as the saying goes "April showers bring May flowers." April Fool's Day is on the first day of April, so beware of the pranksters.

Whenever it comes to our health, we do not want to be fool-hardy. We want to be "healthy and wise." If you have been experiencing vague, odd, persistent respiratory symptoms at work and they are not caused by colds, flu, or allergies, you might be suffering from sick building syndrome.

Sick building syndrome is relatively new. It causes a group of persistent symptoms, including headache, cough, nose, and eye irritation, lightheadedness, and difficulty in concentration.

As the nation became aware of the need to conserve energy, engineers came up with the idea to have 'sealed' buildings.

This is central heating and air conditioning, and windows that do not open. If sealed buildings' ventilation systems work properly, they provide sufficient fresh air. But, if they don't, the result is that the accumulation of indoor air pollutants can be as dirty as air in a steel mill or auto factory.

Here are just a few of the indoor air pollutants that can cause illness:

Tobacco smoke: Which shouldn't be a problem now with the 'no smoking' inside rule. But, if you are around someone that smokes, then you can suffer eye and respiratory irritation from the smoke.

Pesticides: Ants, roaches, and other bugs are bad, but in a sealed building, the chemicals used to control them can be worse.

Carbon monoxide: This chemical from cars' exhaust may be sucked into a building from the outside be-

cause of poorly placed intake vents. This can cause headaches and dizziness, even from just inhaling low doses.

Ask yourself these questions:

Are you the only one sick? When sick building syndrome strikes, usually several people develop similar symptoms.

Do you feel better on the weekends? With sick building syndrome, you will feel ill when exposed to trapped pollutants and better when you are away from them.

Was your building recently renovated with new carpet, paint, or partitions? All of these can produce formaldehyde.

If you answered 'yes' to one or more questions, ask about the ventilation system. The fresh air duct should be located on top of the building.

Air conditioning tends to dry the air. One way to increase indoor air humid-

ity is to keep broad-leaf house plants in your room. When properly watered and misted, the leaves give off both water vapor and oxygen. Many buildings have recirculated air to reduce heating and cooling costs. This maybe good for the utility bill, but it's bad for those in the building. The best thing you can do... get yourself some plants to put around the room.

What if you don't feel better on the weekends? Exposure to certain foods, chemicals, pollen, or animal dander may make you super-sensitive and get your immune system out of whack. If you have any of the following symptoms, you might have an allergy to something.

- Runny nose and sneezing.
- Itchy, watery eyes.
- Dry, itchy, red skin.
- Welts (hives) on the skin.
- Difficulty in breathing.

Allopathic medicine offers two approaches to al-

lergy sufferers. (1) Avoiding the problem (when possible) and (2) taking drugs to relieve the symptoms. The medicine can include:

- Over-the-counter antihistamines.
- Over-the-counter nasal decongestants.
- Prescription drugs for real stubborn cases.

Pollen counts tend to peak between 5:00 AM and 10:00 AM, so limit your outdoor activity at this time. During the pollen season, you should clean your air conditioner filter once a month.

Wind-blown clothes can become pollen catchers. If you don't want to use the dryer, then hang clothes inside to dry.

Fall may bring its share of misery when ragweed and other plants are blooming and spreading pollen. Your respiratory system will catch it with congestion and sneezing. If your doctor advises you to take over-the-

Take time to be Health Conscious



by B J Armstrong

counter antihistamine, it's important to take the medicine each day as a preventative.

Sometimes, certain foods, such as, cherries, peaches, pears, apples, carrots, and potatoes may cause an allergic reaction to some people.

In the spring, some people can and do experience an allergic reaction to watermelon, honeydew, and cantaloupe.

After being outdoors all day in the summer, wash your hair to avoid inhaling pollen that falls on your pillow while you sleep.

As I said in the beginning... this is April. The flowers for this month are the daisy and sweet pea. Easter Sunday is April 12th. Dress up pretty and boil lots of eggs. And remember...we serve a risen Savior!

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