



By: Dr. Rima Sanka

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Normally, the human body defends itself against viruses or bacteria, but sometimes the defenses aggressively attack other substances such as dust, mold, or pollen. People are exposed to allergens through inhalation, ingestion, contact with skin, and injection.

The immune system generates antibodies called immunoglobulin E (IgE), a molecule to attack and destroy the allergen. Each IgE antibody specifically targets a particular allergen and can be tested individually.

In this process, inflammatory chemicals like histamines, cytokines, and leukotrienes are released or produced, and unpleasant (or life-threatening, in the case of anaphylaxis) symptoms may be experienced by an allergic person.

The primary method of preventing allergy symptoms is for patients to avoid the allergens that trigger the allergies. This is possible for certain allergens such as a cat or a dog that can be

removed from the home. However, other ubiquitous allergens such as oak, pollen or ragweed are almost impossible to avoid.

Medication can be very helpful and generally,



have low side effects. When medication is not

enough, immunotherapy is the key to long term management and a potential cure for allergies and allergic asthma. Immunotherapy is also known as "allergy vaccines" or "allergy shots". It is the introduction of small but slowly increasing amounts of allergen into the body, eventually changing the immune system to tolerate a normal level of allergen, rendering their allergies no longer a problem.

Basically, immunotherapy trains the body to not see the allergens as foreign substances that it needs to attack. The hypersensitivity is gone and so are the disabling symptoms. Most people on immunotherapy for 1-3 years are sick less often, have less severe infections, and generally improve their quality of life without the need and expense of daily medication.

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Feel free to write in with comments or feedback to HealthTalk@citymasala.com.

My New Toy - The Blackberry Curve

By: Chhaya Sanghavi

My friend, Pete, sent me an early Christmas gift this year. I am now a proud owner of the Blackberry Curve.

I am a die hard Blackberry fan. I used to work in the cellular industry and I always had several different types of cell phones at my disposal. With all the technology around me, I found that nothing ever came close to the Blackberry.

Everything about the Blackberry screams efficiency and productivity. It offers a full qwerty keyboard making the task of composing emails and text messages easier, the quality of voice is above average, the added features like phone logs where you can also make notes for each call (beneficial for people who bill per minute), the push functionality of email, web browsing and calendar, and everything synchronizes with your computer. You have all the information you need in the palm of your hand! I never even complained that my old Blackberry did not have polyphonic ring tones.

With my latest toy, I have everything I wanted in a phone and then some more. I actually use different polyphonic ring tones for a select few people. The only thing I miss from the old Blackberry is



the wheel and I am still getting used to the trackball.

The phone is slick looking, the voice quality is fantastic as always and it even has a camera! Since Blackberry is touted to be the epitome of efficiency used by executives and top government officials, the grapevine in the cell industry was that RIM would never have a camera in their phone since it is considered frivolous; some people I know have even said, "It is a data device,

not a toy!!" RIM did take the camera a notch higher, the 8310 Blackberry has a 2mp camera with a built in zoom which can take some awesome pictures for a cell phone!

The streaming media works beautifully, the sound quality, even without the stereo headset is above par. It has a built-in MP3 player and I can play my favorite songs and videos that I have downloaded to the media memory card.

The built in GPS TeleNav Maps application is sure to come in handy for people like me who are always looking to find a shortcut, even in an unknown area!

I tried the built in voice activated calling feature on my phone and even with my accent and *desi* names, the phone was able to pick up on the name. The first test was... "call Shaphali Jain", and it

asked me for choices on the number I wanted to call her at! The speakerphone is easy to use, the sound is clear and loud enough to walk around in a room and have a conversation.

Even though the Curve has Bluetooth capabilities for a headset, I have not yet had a chance to use one. Pete recommended getting the Jawbone Aliph, so I ordered it online and I am still waiting for it to be shipped to me. In the meanwhile I am happy using the stereo headset that came in the box.