



By: Dr. Rima Sanka

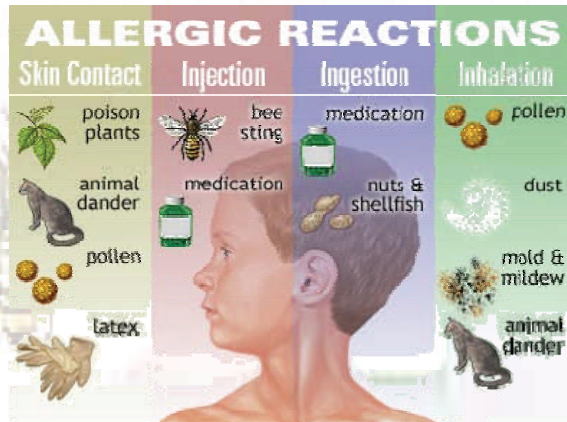
This is a personal account from an unfortunate gentleman posted on [www.allergynursing.com](http://www.allergynursing.com), "I moved from Redlands, Ca. to Destin, Florida (panhandle) 5 years ago. I was fine for the first couple of years but in the past three have been simply miserable. It comes and goes all year leading me to believe it's a mold or spore thing. Claritin D and Rhinocort are only a thin veiled shield against whatever is getting me. I'll go home to Michigan and in a day or two feel awesome. The burning eyes, stomach pains, complete lethargy, depression, and just plain meanness are gone and return with a vengeance within a day of getting back home to Florida. It's so bad I am leaving Florida (sold our house and will be moving north in a month or so). I'm a very fit 37 year old male with literally no other health problems".

Does this sound familiar to you at all? Perhaps you know of someone who has experienced similar, if not such dramatic problems.

My name is Dr. Rima Sanka and I recently completed my fellowship training at USF in Adult and Pediatric Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology. One of the main roles played by allergists is to educate patients on what their true allergies are, how to avoid them, and how to treat and/or cure them so they may live a healthy lifestyle. It is my hope that this column should answer some of the common questions, verify or refute common allergy myths to be true or false, and empower you to make positive decisions with regard to your health and allergies.

Since this is the introductory article, I will start with some basic facts.

- Estimates from a skin test survey suggest that allergies affect as many as 40 to 50 million people in the United States.
- Allergic diseases affect more than 20% of the U.S. population and 40% of children.
- Allergic diseases are the sixth leading cause of chronic disease in the United States.
- It is estimated that in 1998, increased absenteeism and reduced productivity due to allergies cost U.S. companies more



than \$250 million. Allergies are also linked to attention problems and poor school performance in children.

- There are many types of allergies. Allergies to indoor and outdoor allergens (such as pollen, dust or mold), food, medicine, and insects are the main problems. We spend more than 20 hours per day indoors which contributes to perennial (or year-round) allergies.
- Viral upper respiratory infections can aggravate allergies.

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## The Parents' ChatRoom

By: Dr. Maulik Trivedi



**Q. Dear Dr. Trivedi - I am a single mother and have a 9 year old son. He is suddenly very interested in his body and asks me questions that I don't quite know how to answer. I do go on the Internet to research my answers but don't know if I am being able to address the questions correctly. What books or web sites can I refer to, to understand a growing boy's body better so I can answer his questions in a manner he is able to understand?** C. Shah from Brandon, FL

**A.** Curiosity and fascination with the body begins very early in the child's life. Initially, the child explores his or her own body anatomically and later, this curiosity expands to understanding the functions of the different parts of the body.

It is very important to put aside your own anxiety as a single parent of the opposite gender who has to explain things to your son. First of all, doing research on the subject is an excellent way to assure the accuracy of your information. Second, and more importantly, you must explain the information to your son in language that he can understand. Develop a dialogue instead of just delivering information and allow opportunities for your son to show his understanding of the information. Understand his intent behind the question. This can be simply determined by asking him, "What made you want to know this or why do you ask?" Remember to teach your child that knowledge always comes with responsibility. Third, it is vital for the parent to provide this information because a parent is most likely to provide correct information with proper context. If you don't do this, he is likely to get misinformation from unreliable sources which can be harmful in the long run.

Lastly, use your own judgment to provide as much information as he is asking for and which is appropriate for his level of understanding. I do not endorse any websites, but in my research for your answer, the following sources on the web looked pretty good for your situation - [www.kidshealth.org/kid/grow/index.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/grow/index.html) and <http://www.bam.gov> is another one by the CDC about the body and mind.

**Q. Dear Dr. Trivedi - I have a 17 year old daughter who is getting ready to go to medical school next year. She is a bright girl with a wonderful future but is consumed with being as independent as possible. She wants to find a part-time job right now so that she has more spending money. My husband and I are willing to give her as much money as she needs but she insists on being more self-sufficient. We believe that she should concentrate 100% on her studies and not be distracted with a minimum wage job. I don't want to squash her independent spirit but do want her to realize that getting a job is a distraction right now. How do I make her understand this?** Mr. & Mrs. Nair from West Chase, FL.

**A.** First of all, you are to be congratulated for having raised a daughter who values initiative and has the zeal to challenge herself. Understandably, your fear is her increased hardship resulting in a setback. For the older adolescent on the verge of adulthood, life often moves forward in bursts and then stagnates. The bursts often seem untimely and may appear to be detrimental in the bigger picture to someone who is more experienced. To be more specific, your daughter's psychological

need to seek more independent functioning is a sudden burst of her own need to express her adult role. Perhaps like her peers or role models, she aspires to 'do it all'.

Your best approach to resolve the difference in perspectives and goals is to propose a contingency plan. Such a plan allows her to fulfill her psychological need (to do more adult-like things) without compromising her academic path. If you state your concerns frankly and listen to her wishes openly, you will find common ground that you can both agree on.

1. Define a target number of hours of work that will allow her to experience her adult role and give you the chance to know that she can juggle it. If her grades drop, she must give up her job.
2. She can accept a loan from you that she will be responsible for paying back by working during her breaks and vacations when academic responsibilities would not be an issue.
3. The type of job she takes can often be a rewarding experience towards a future career in medicine, i.e. working at a hospital, a lab, or even at a hospital library. As long as she maintains her grades, she deserves the opportunity to satisfy her need for independence.

*Dr. Trivedi is a Board-Certified Psychiatrist with a private office in Tampa. He treats children, adolescents and adults. Please visit [www.MINDvantage.com](http://www.MINDvantage.com) for more information. Send your questions to: [theparentschatroom@citymasala.com](mailto:theparentschatroom@citymasala.com).*