



Spring Newsletter

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Spring is Here! And so are Your Allergies...

As soon as things warm up and the snow starts to melt, noses begin to run and eyes water and itch.

More than 1 in 6 Canadians suffer from hay fever, or allergic rhinitis. The symptoms are a result of the body's immune system reacting to "allergens" such as molds and the pollen in plants and flowers.

There are a number of medications to help allergy sufferers, such as antihistamines and corticosteroids. Many medications work best if they are started be-

fore your seasonal allergies begin.

Older antihistamines like diphenhydramine (Benadryl) work well, but need to be taken more often than newer options. Diphenhydramine also tends to make people quite drowsy.

Newer antihistamines include cetirizine (Reactine), loratidine (Claritin), desloratidine (Aerius), and fexofenadine (Allegra). These can all be taken once daily, and cause little to no drowsiness.

Generic versions are available for antihistamines, and work just as well as the brand name product.

If you are experiencing allergy symptoms talk to your pharmacist or doctor, and they will help find the right medication for you.

Allergy symptoms:

- Red, itchy, watery eyes
- Stuffy / runny nose
- Sneezing

For more on how to help your allergies, see Page 3

Inside this issue:

Sun Safety	2
Drug-Free Allergy Assistance	3
First Aid Kits	3
Sudoku and Fun Facts	4

Vitamin C: Not Just for Scurvy

Vitamin C is an essential nutrient. Historically, sailors would suffer from scurvy (spots on the skin and loss of teeth) when they travelled without fresh fruits and vegetables and became deficient.

Vitamin C helps the body absorb iron, and has also been suggested to help with a long list of conditions, including preventing the common cold.

It is not clear which conditions are truly prevented by vitamin C,

but eating lots of fresh fruits and vegetables can help make sure you get enough. Vitamin C supplements are available as well. Ask your pharmacist if you are looking for one!



Have you found this information helpful? - Pass it on to a friend



“Look for at least SPF 15, however SPF of 30 or more is often recommended”



Safe Sun Exposure

Sun exposure is believed to contribute to 90% of skin cancer cases. This increased risk is due to harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. There are two types of rays which contact the skin and cause damage, UVA and UVB.

Some people have a higher risk of skin cancer, including those who:

- Have light coloured skin, hair and eyes
- Work, play or exercise in the sun for long periods of time
- Have experienced several blistering sunburns as a child
- Take drugs that make them more sensitive to UV light

However, everyone’s risk of skin cancer increases with more exposure to the sun.

Reducing your time in the sun, especially between the hours of 11am and 4pm when the sun is most intense, can reduce your risk.

When outside, cover your skin with loose fitting tight knit clothing and be sure to wear a hat.

Sunscreen should be worn, especially on exposed skin. Don’t forget your face, ears and the tops of your feet!

Indoor tanning is **NOT** a safe alternative to sun exposure. Tanning beds also expose you to harmful UV rays and have been shown to increase your risk of skin cancer.

Eyes can be damaged by sun exposure too. Wearing sunglasses can help keep your eyes healthy. Look for a pair that blocks both UVA and UVB.

Don’t Get Burned!

Sun products work in different ways. While **sunscreen** may contain ingredients such as PABA, benzophenones and mexoryl which absorb into your skin to prevent UV damage, **sun-block** contains agents such as zinc or titanium oxide which sit on top of the skin to physically block the UV rays. **Suntan oils and lotions** on the other hand, may not contain anything to block the UV rays of the sun, and may actually magnify their effects and increase the damage to your skin.

Make sure your sunscreen blocks both UVA and UVB. SPF is the “Skin Protection Factor” and is a measure of how long the product’s protection lasts. A higher SPF rating means that the product will protect your skin longer. Look for at least SPF 15, however SPF of 30 or more is often

recommended. Ask your pharmacist to suggest a sunscreen for you if you are unsure which is best. If you have some at home look at the expiry date on the bottle, if it is outdated or no date is listed replace it! Don’t get burned!

Read the label to make sure you are using enough sunscreen to cover your skin, and apply at least 30 minutes before you are in the sun. Reapply after swimming, toweling off or sweating. Reapplying replaces sunscreen that has been lost, it **does not** increase how long you will be protected for. Sunscreen reduces risk of damage but it does not eliminate it. You shouldn’t increase your time in the sun just because you have sunscreen on. Make sure you cover up!

Children are very sensitive to the sun. Sunscreen is not recommended in children less than 6 months old, so keep them covered.

Non-Drug Advice for Seasonal Allergy Sufferers

Avoiding allergens can help your medication work better. If your allergies are caused by outdoor allergens (like pollen) here are a few things you can do:

- Keep doors and windows closed
- Do not use window or attic fans
- If air conditioning is necessary, use an indoor cycle
- Monitor weather reports on pollen counts. Pollen counts tend to be highest on sunny, windy days
- Do not dry clothing outdoors
- Shower or bathe after outdoor activity to remove pollen from hair and skin and prevent contamination of bedding



First Aid Kits

Nice weather helps get us all outside. But with many outdoor activities come the bumps and scrapes of minor injuries.

Having a well stocked first aid kit can help treat minor cuts and scrapes and keep them clean to prevent infection. This helps wounds heal and gets you back to enjoying your favorite activities sooner.

First aid kits are not all the same. A simple kit may contain bandages to treat minor cuts and scrapes while larger kits may have everything needed to treat more serious injuries and accidents. Being prepared with the right kit for your needs is very important.

So what should you have in a basic

first aid kit? Here are a few suggestions:

- Vinyl / Nitrile gloves (many people have allergies to latex)
- Waterproof adhesive bandages (pack of assorted sizes and shapes)
- Non-adhesive gauze pads
- Adhesive tape
- Triangular bandages
- Elastic (tensor) bandage
- Antiseptic cleansing wipes
- Safety pins
- Scissors
- Waterproof waste bag

Come in and talk to our Home Healthcare staff. They can provide you with a first aid kit to meet your needs, large and small.

“Having the right tools does not help if you don’t know how to use them!”

“I have a Kit. But what do I do with it?”

Have you ever been there when someone was hurt, but didn’t know how to help them?

Having the right tools does not help if you don’t know how to use them!

Our Home and Healthcare staff would be happy to help you learn about individual products.

For more in depth training on how to deal with injuries, and proper use of

first aid equipment look for classes offered by community colleges and first aid associations.

First aid courses are much more than getting a certificate; first aid is a useful life skill. Knowing basic first aid can help you deal with injuries, and may even help you save someone’s life.

Get outside and have fun this spring, but be safe out there!





We hope this information has been helpful and informative! If there is a topic you would like to see in the next Stafford Pharmacy Newsletter let us know!

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Working Your Brain Helps Prevent Alzheimers Try This Sudoku Puzzle!

How to Play:

The objective of sudoku is to enter a digit from 1 through 9 in each cell, in such a way that:

- Each horizontal **row** contains each digit exactly **once**
- Each vertical **column** contains each digit exactly **once**
- Each subgrid or **region** (3x3 box) contains each digit exactly **once**

7	9					3		
					6	9		
8				3			7	6
					5			2
		5	4	1	8	7		
4			7					
6	1			9				8
		2	3					
		9					5	4

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This explains the name of the game; in Japanese, *sudoku* means something like "numbers singly".

Some Medications Are More "Natural" Than You Think

These medications are all found in plants or fungi:

- Acetylsalicylic acid (Aspirin) was originally isolated from willow bark.
- Lovastatin (Mevacor) is a cholesterol lowering medication that is naturally produced in red rice yeast.
- Penicillin was first isolated by Alexander Fleming from a fungi. In fact it is named after the fungi from which it came; *penicillium*.
- Digoxin is used to treat heart failure, and originally came from fox glove.
- Paclitaxel (Taxol) is an anti-cancer drug which is found in the bark of Pacific Yew trees.

Herbal products work on receptors in your body just like drugs do, which means they also have side effects and interact with other herbs and medications. This is why it is important that you talk to your doctor or pharmacist before starting any therapy, whether it is a prescription pill or a herbal remedy.