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Cold or allergy?

(NAPS) Your nose is stuffy and it itches.

Something's wrong, but is it a cold or an allergy?

Colds and nasal allergies have similar symptoms, and both can occur at any time of the year, says Dr. Kathy Rickard, Director of U.S. Respiratory Medical Affairs at Glaxo Wellcome Inc..

So how do you tell the difference? According to Dr. Rickard, the following checklist may help to identify your symptoms.

Cold

- lasts 5-7 days, sometimes 2 weeks
- causes fever, muscle pains, and aches
- produces thick, yellowish mucous

Allergy

- lasts much longer
- does not cause aches and pains
- mucous is watery and thin

If your nose is stuffy, itchy and sneezy, it usually means that you have a nasal allergy, not a cold. To be sure, ask your doctor. But it helps to have enough facts in hand

to help the doctor make an accurate diagnosis.

Pay attention to what your body is telling you, Dr. Rickard says. An accurate patient history is extremely important in confirming the diagnosis of nasal allergies.

Some questions to ask yourself: Are your symptoms getting worse, better or staying the same? When do they occur?

How long is your discomfort? What are you doing when you sneeze or your nose itches?

Allergies occur when the body reacts negatively to environmental factors. When allergens like dust or pollen enter the nose, the body mistakes them for enemies and attacks, causing the nose to swell and become inflamed.

There are two types of allergies: seasonal and perennial. Seasonal allergies occur mostly in spring from tree or grass pollen, or during the fall when ragweed blooms.

Perennial or year-round allergies don't go away and are usually triggered from dust, mold and animal hair.

If one of your parents has allergies, you have a one-in-three chance of getting them. Seasonal allergies affect up to 10 percent of

school-age children, and 21-23 percent of adolescents. Each section of the country has its own allergy season, depending on geography, vegetation and climate.

According to Dr. Rickard, the best way to stay allergy-free is to know the allergens that cause the problem and avoid them. But when that's not possible, a variety of allergy treatments is available.

Medicines to combat nasal allergies include antihistamines for sneezing, itchy or runny nose; decongestants to shrink nasal blood vessels; shots to make the body less sensitive to certain allergy-causing agents; and anti-inflammatory nasal sprays that work directly to reduce the symptoms of a sneezing, itchy and runny nose, according to Dr. Rickard.

With the increased appreciation that nasal allergies are due to an inflammatory process, anti-inflammatory nasal sprays have taken on a greater role in allergy treatment.

Before taking any medication to treat nasal allergies or the symptoms of any other illness or disease, consult your physician.

What do you know about your hardworking skin?

(NAPS) How much do you know about your skin?

For a start, it's the largest organ in the human body, covering up to 20 square feet.

These facts might make you appreciate your skin

Skin works hard at protecting the body, preventing bacteria and chemicals from entering it and keeping vital fluids in.

The epidermis, the skin's outer layer which covers most parts of the body, is about as thick as a sheet of paper.

Dry skin is due to a lack of water in the skin's outer layer. Normally, oils or lipids in the skin help trap water in the skin and prevent it from evaporating.

Causes of dry skin include low relative humidity levels from indoor heat, cold winter air or even air conditioning, excessive sun or wind exposure, excessive contact with soaps and detergents, heredity, aging, medically related conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, diabetes and contact dermatitis.

To avoid dry skin, shower and

bathe in warm not hot water. Use a mild cleanser.

If you have dry skin, immediately after showering or bathing, dermatologists recommend that you pat skin dry and apply a moisturizer.

Other ways to help heal dry skin include drinking several glasses of water a day, using gloves or protective clothing while doing housework or household improvements and applying a moisturizing sun screen before you spend any extensive time outdoors.

Oops
HereIt is! corrections

In the Christmas Concert story, (Dec. 6) Dr. David Pinnix's name was misspelled.

The Bennett Banner wants to correct mistakes appearing in the newspaper. If you believe that we have made a factual error, please stop by the Banner office in Shell Hall C-2 or send a note to Campus Box 25.

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