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AAFA-TX thanks those who made donations in memory of and in tribute to Mrs. Mary Karen Burkett of Ft. Worth. These gifts will help us serve the community with free programs and services. Thank you. For more information, contact AAFA-TX

THE POTENTIAL DANGERS OF UNTREATED ALLERGIC RHINITIS

* **Allergic RHINITIS**, commonly referred to as runny nose, is an inflammation in the nose caused by exposure to an allergen. A person with rhinitis may also have other symptoms besides a runny nose: sneezing, or congestion, or an itchy feeling in the nose, throat, or roof of the mouth, or even watery or itchy eyes and blurred vision or a combination of these, and the symptoms can vary each day. **Seasonal allergic rhinitis, generally called Hay Fever**, comes at certain times of the year and is usually triggered by pollens. But **if you have symptoms all year round**, then you have *perennial allergic rhinitis* and **this is generally caused by environmental allergens** including but not limited to dust mites, mold, animal dander, cockroaches or chemical irritants.

* For most people, a common treatment for **rhinitis** symptoms is to use over-the-counter antihistamines. But for children and some adults, **chronic rhinitis could pose a danger if not treated by a healthcare provider**.

* Because our nose, throat and ears are all inter-related, **sometimes chronic rhinitis symptoms leads to other long-term medical problems**, some with serious results, especially for young children.

* Untreated allergic rhinitis can provoke a **middle ear infection**. This infection occurs because allergic rhinitis can cause inflammation which results in swelling in both the nose and in the ear canal. This swelling could block normal drainage in the middle ear, resulting in a bacterial build-up followed by an ear infection, quite common in younger kids.

* **Some** people with allergic rhinitis have **a lot of mucus that either drips from the nose**, resulting in constant blowing of the nose and eventually a sore nose, **or the mucus might drain down the back of the throat** instead, a condition known as **post-nasal drip**. Post-nasal drip, if untreated, can lead to coughing, especially at night, to sore throats and a husky voice or even to laryngitis.

* In dry climates such as we have in much of Texas and other parts of the southwest, the mucus in the nose caused by rhinitis might become very thick and dry instead of drippy. This can **irritate the throat** making it sore and it **can also cause nasal congestion**. No amount of blowing clears the blockage and the excess blowing can also cause ear problems. Winter central heating and summer air conditioning, both of which dry indoor air, aggravates this condition.

* This nasal congestion and blockage **can cause headaches and sleep disorders** like snoring or even **sleep apnea**, a condition where a person “forgets” or isn’t able to breathe while sleeping.

* An *apnea* is a period of time during which breathing stops or is markedly reduced. In simplified terms, an apnea occurs when a person stops breathing for 10 seconds or more. Apneas usually occur during sleep. It is common among adults but rare among children.

* There are two types of sleep apnea; the more common type is obstructive sleep apnea where congestion due to rhinitis or another blockage prevents normal breathing while asleep. **When an apnea occurs, sleep is disrupted**. Sometimes this means the person wakes up completely, but sometimes this can mean the person comes out of a deep level of sleep and into a more shallow level of sleep. The treatment of sleep apnea may be either surgical or nonsurgical; only your physician can decide the best treatment plan for you.

* **Untreated chronic rhinitis can also produce** enough inflammation that the openings to the sinus cavities are blocked and this can lead to **bacterial infection in the sinuses**. Both children and adults can suffer from sinusitis or infection in any one or all of the 4 pairs of sinus cavities in our face. Sometimes kids won’t complain of pain in the sinus, but adults are generally more sensitive to the pain, sometimes mistaking the pain, which can be severe, as a migraine. Since one pair of sinus cavities is close to the mouth, sometimes the pain may be misinterpreted as problems with the teeth.

* Occasionally acute sinusitis can result in a fever and a green nasal discharge. For **chronic or constant sinusitis**, neither children nor adults might have fever or pain. Kids might act moody or miserable and **most patients will have a runny nose with a greenish discharge plus congestion** to the point where it’s necessary to breathe through the mouth. For young children who have difficulty blowing their nose anyway, these infected sinuses will drain into the ears resulting in a middle ear infection. If you or your child has **perennial allergic rhinitis, it’s important to see a physician for a proper assessment and the right medications to prevent ear, nose or throat problems**.

Upcoming Free AAFA-TX Programs: **1) Sat. Oct. 13**, “Diagnosing & Managing Asthma: Successful Asthma Control for Kids & Adults” Wm. Lumry, MD, Robert Rogers, MD, Eric Schmitt, MD, William Neaville, MD faculty, Richard Herrscher, MD Moderator. Rebecca Gruchalla, MD, PhD, Program Director. Presbyterian Hospital, Dallas. A CME program worth 4 category 1 CME for physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and nurses. **For details, contact AAFA-TX. Pre-registration required** **2) Sat. Oct. 13** – “Asthma & Allergy Essentials for Childcare Providers” Kids R Kids, Katy, TX, Sarah Nelson, instructor. **3) Sat. Nov. 3**, “Asthma & Allergy Essentials for Childcare Providers” Grandma’s House Childcare Ctr. Houston, Sarah Nelson, instructor. **4) Fri. Nov. 9, 8:00-11:00 am**, “**Asthma Management & Education**” a CEU program for nurses and respiratory therapists worth 3 contact hrs, Texas State School Nurse Organization Conference, Houston, TX. Pre-registration required with the TSNO. **For information, contact AAFA-TX.**

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