

The Examiner

A Publication of Allergy A.R.T.S.

Dangerous Duo: Asthma & Allergies

A 14-year-old boy suddenly begins coughing and has difficulty breathing when visiting a friend who has a cat. This occurs despite being raised with no apparent health problems and with a cat in the house when he was younger.

When the air becomes chilly, a 42-year-old woman turns on her home's forced air furnace and soon notices a tightness in her chest and increasing shortness of breath. As it worsens, she asks her husband to take her to the emergency room as she fears she might be having a heart attack.

Both of these individuals eventually are diagnosed as suffering from allergic (extrinsic) asthma, the most common form of asthma, affecting more than 50 percent of the 20 million asthma sufferers in the United States.

In fact, statistics indicate that about 80 percent of children and 50 percent of adults with asthma also have allergies.

Most of the symptoms of allergic and non-allergic asthma are the same. They may include:

- shortness of breath
- rapid breathing
- wheezing
- coughing and/or
- tightness in the chest.

In extreme cases, the symptoms can rapidly accelerate resulting in airway obstruction and inflammation that is life-threatening. Indeed, about 5,000 Americans die each year as the result of an asthma attack.

Six Ways to Reduce Allergic Asthma Attacks

1. **Know** your allergy triggers and avoid them as much as possible.
2. **Vacuum** carpets and fabrics at least twice each week
3. **Launder** sheets, blankets and pillow cases in hot water each week
4. **Replace** furnace and air conditioning filters frequently
5. **Visit** your allergist regularly
6. **Follow** to the letter your allergist's prescribed treatment plan

The good news is that with proper care and medication asthma can be controlled, allowing most of those afflicted to enjoy a normal, active lifestyle.

Triggers
Allergic asthma episodes are usually triggered by inhaled allergens, including pet dander, dust mites, mold, household dust, pollen, certain detergents and perfumes, and other microbial material.

The teenage boy had developed an allergy to pet dander when going through the hormonal changes of puberty – but didn't know it until exposed to the cat.

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Arthritis Support

Now in its fourth year, the Amarillo Arthritis & Fibromyalgia Support Group has nearly concluded its latest season.

Recommended by Allergy A.R.T.S., the group meets on the third Tuesday of each month at the Amarillo North Branch Public Library, 6100 West Ninth, through the month of October.

The gathering begins at 6 p.m. with a gentle exercise class in Tai Chi, followed by a social time and dinner at 6:30. Allergy A.R.T.S. provides the meal. At 7 p.m. a special program is presented on various topics, from pain management and sleep therapy, to exercise options and medical updates.

Mark your calendars to join us on **October 16**. After a break for the slippery, cold winter season, meetings will begin again in March 2008.

For more information, please contact Judy Moenter at 354-8828.

CLINIC NEWS



Woman of the Year!

Our very own **Kathy Brecht** – who is the regulatory coordinator for our affiliate Amarillo Center for Clinical Research – recently was named the 2007 Woman of the Year by the American Business Women's Association Amarillo chapter.

Nominees for this award are singled out for having demonstrated superior leadership and work ethic, and for achieving goals and accomplishments. Kathy was especially praised for her fundraising efforts and her work with handicapped children. Said ABWA President Martha Campbell, "Kathy really gets things done, and has a wonderful attitude along with it."

But, hey, we already knew that.
Congratulations, Kathy!

Winter Health Prep

As autumn begins, we can't help but realize that winter lurks just around the corner. With that in mind, it pays to prepare in order to remain healthy and active through the coldest months.

Each person has his or her own unique challenges, but most can benefit from these suggestions:

- Replace all furnace filters and give the house a good cleaning before closing it up for the winter
- Schedule indoor activities that provide good exercise options (and avoid the temptation to only sit by the fire!), including: mall walking, swimming, yoga or stretching classes, etc.
- Cover your mouth and nose before going out into cold, dry air
- Eat healthy – it's the best time for good soups!
- Use caution with slippery conditions, both walking and driving

Enjoy the peace and renewal inherent to winter, and emerge ready to greet the spring sunshine!

Next Best Thing to a Cure

Believe it or not, there are few things I would like more than to go out of business because all of my patients have been completely cured.

At this time, however, most allergy, asthma, arthritis and auto-immune diseases are best addressed with treatments that reduce and/or ease symptoms, but, sadly, include no magic pill or simple surgery to permanently erase these conditions. I sincerely wish there were.

When I was a boy of just 6 years, I was diagnosed with asthma. Since then, I have been interested in it, and have studied and worked to help others control its symptoms, and those of allergies, arthritis and other auto-immune conditions.

While there is no cure, we can offer the next best thing: a specific treatment plan that, in most cases, will greatly improve your life.

For example, many allergy sufferers choose to go through our immunotherapy program which – if faithfully followed – can lead to alleviation of symptoms in three to five years in most patients.

Treatment options for those with asthma have improved tremendously, and rheumatoid arthritis research shows more promise for significant relief than ever before.

Until there is a cure, all of us here at Allergy A.R.T.S. are committed to doing everything we can to help our patients live healthy, active lives.

To your health!
Constantine Saadeh, M.D., FACP, FACR



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ALLERGY/ASTHMA

Dangerous Duo *(continued from page 1)*

The woman found out she had become allergic to dust mites and mold, even at a later age (which seems to happen more often to middle-aged women than men), but wasn't affected in the extreme until one cool October morning when she turned on the home furnace, which had been sitting idle for months. The dust and mold that had accumulated over the summer in the ductwork suddenly blew out into the room bringing on her frightening asthma attack.

Other types of allergens also can trigger an asthma episode, including (but not limited to) ingested foods such as peanut butter, eggs, fish, nuts, cow's milk, food additives such as sulfites, and environmental substances such as latex.

Certain "irritants" can cause an asthma attack, as well, with the main culprits being tobacco smoke, aspirin, NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), dry cold air, and beta blockers (medications used to treat heart conditions and high blood pressure).

Diagnosis & Treatment

Each asthma sufferer is unique and therefore is best served by obtaining a proper diagnosis and a specifically designed treatment regimen. Those who also deal with allergies are especially encouraged to see

a board-certified allergist/immunologist such as Allergy A.R.T.S.'s very own Dr. Constantine Saadeh.

The chronic inflammation of the bronchial tubes that causes swelling and narrowing is often either totally or at least partially reversible with appropriate treatment. A fairly long list of medications is available to help patients control and/or obtain relief from asthma symptoms.

Some asthma medications work by relaxing the airway spasm (bronchodilators) or reducing inflammation (corticosteroids). Inhaled medications are often used as they act directly on the airway surface and muscles and can bring almost instant relief.

Another type of inhalant belonging to a group of long-acting beta-2 agonists offers a sustained duration of effect for up to 12 hours. Some people use them twice each day to ward off asthma attacks.

Oral and intravenous medications also may be used in conjunction with inhalers in certain cases – especially when symptoms become difficult to control.

When dealing with allergic asthma, quite often reducing allergy problems can go a long way toward warding off asthma episodes. ■

Calling All RA Patients!

If you have rheumatoid arthritis (RA), and are actively involved in treatment, you may be able to help yourself – and others – by agreeing to participate in a research study being conducted right here in Amarillo.

The Amarillo Center for Clinical Research (ACCR), an affiliate of Allergy A.R.T.S., has several ongoing RA research studies for which participants are needed.

If you are interested and think you may qualify, or just want more information, please contact us at 353-7000. You may also visit the Web site: www.accrftd.com.

*"There is a harmony in autumn,
and a luster in its sky..."*

Percy Bysshe Shelley

News About Dr. Ramos

With both regret and well wishes, we announce that Dr. Luis Ramos, Dr. Saadeh's colleague rheumatologist here at Allergy A.R.T.S., has been offered, and has decided to accept a new position in Florida. While we respect and support his decision to retreat from the Amarillo winters, we will miss him – and know his patients will, too.

Please rest assured that we have already put into effect with our medical team alternate care and treatment schedules that ensure each and every patient will continue to receive the superior care for which Allergy A.R.T.S. is so very well known.

Dr. Ramos' patients should watch the mail for a special letter from us containing vital information they need to know as we move forward. Please call us if you have any questions whatsoever.

And please join us as we wish Dr. Ramos good luck and all the best in his new position!

Autumn Allergies Alert!

Along with the change in the seasons, at least 20 percent of us each autumn face mild to severe allergic rhinitis caused by one or all of three trouble-makers: ragweed pollen, weed pollen and mold.

Symptoms mimic a cold, but without the fever, and include sneezing, nasal/chest congestion, red, itchy eyes and clear, runny nasal discharge. If severe enough, allergic reactions can lead to sinus infections and difficulty breathing.

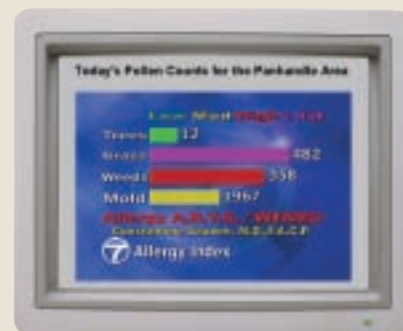
Asthma sufferers need to take special care, as allergy symptoms can lead to asthma flare-ups and attacks.

Saline nasal sprays and over-the-counter remedies can help, especially with mild to moderate cases. However, the best remedy is to "get ahead" of the symptoms by being prepared before the season gets fully underway.

If you haven't already, come see us here at Allergy A.R.T.S. for some relief and a plan to make things easier in the future.

It also helps to know what you are facing by checking out the daily pollen and mold counts simply by going to www.allergyarts.com and clicking on the "Pollen Count" button. This information also is available in daily broadcasts from Amarillo on KVII-TV Channel 7.

Remember: if autumn allergies get you down, don't wait. The sooner you get your symptoms under control, the happier and healthier you'll be!



Anderson (left) and Noah Weese

When 3-year-old Anderson Weese suffered an asthma attack last Christmas severe enough for hospitalization, his parents – Maegan and Scott Weese from northern New Mexico – vowed to find better medical help if he ever had another serious episode. He did, in April.

"We immediately tried to get into an Albuquerque specialist, but they couldn't see

The Dynamic Duo!

him until August," Maegan explained. "My friend, Mimi Moore, a nurse practitioner here, called Allergy A.R.T.S. They were able to see us just two weeks out and also told us how to help Anderson until then, which was great."

Maegan's mother is treated for rheumatoid arthritis at Allergy A.R.T.S., but the family was unaware asthma treatments also are available.

At the appointment, they were told Anderson was dangerously allergic to a variety of plants – "everything outside," said his mother. Treatment began immediately and he has not had a severe asthma attack since.

But the story doesn't end there. With Anderson that first day was his twin brother, Noah, who had suffered from severe eczema and rashes, and chronic diarrhea, for most of his life. (A dermatologist had told Maegan that Noah would just outgrow the problem.)

Recalled Maegan, "Clint Bell (Nursing Director at Allergy A.R.T.S.) spotted Noah's skin condition and said, 'What do we have here? We might have a food allergy. Let's find out.' And it was. We were told Noah is extremely allergic to corn. So, we eliminated it from our diet completely. Even my mom and sister avoid it, as the boys are often in their homes." Daughter Kerrigan (7) doesn't have allergies, but the entire family eats the same food.

The results were dramatic. Noah's skin completely cleared up, he gained weight and "he has become a much healthier and happier child. He is a different kid," Maegan said.

"We go back to the clinic every two months; it is easily worth the three-plus hours drive from our home to Amarillo." Maegan added, "I love the staff at Allergy A.R.T.S. They take so much time and care with us. I hate to think where the boys would be without them." ■

MEET THE STAFF

Yalily Valdez

More than 5,100 miles separate Amarillo, Texas, and Yalily Valdez's childhood country of Chile, South America. Nevertheless, Yalily has found a happy home here, as well as a fulfilling job at Allergy A.R.T.S. as its Director of Pharmacy Services.

Yalily earned her Associate Science Degree at Amarillo College where she studied pre-pharmacy. As a certified pharmacy technician (CPhT), Yalily worked in a pharmacy for 12 years, taught at the Academy of Professional Careers for one year, and also taught Spanish at Amarillo College.

In April 2003 Yalily spotted an Allergy A.R.T.S. job posting in the *Amarillo Globe-News*. "I admit I could not understand why a doctor's office needed a pharmacy tech, but as fast as we have grown and as busy as we are, I now understand the need for a CPhT," she explained.

Yalily's department is responsible for all aspects of managing prescription fulfillment in a timely manner, including helping patients with forms and other assistance. "We work one-on-one with the doctors and nurse practitioners to ensure patients are compliant with all medications, especially controlled drugs or narcotics," she said. "I have always enjoyed learning new things and expanding my knowledge in the medical field, and working at Allergy A.R.T.S. has certainly given me that opportunity.

"I also enjoy people, patients as well as fellow employees, and the overall environment in which I work. I am truly thankful to Dr. Saadeh and Michael Gaylor for giving me the chance to become part of the team."

Yalily is happily married and has three children – two boys and a girl – who keep her on her toes. She enjoys swimming, hiking and going bike riding with her family.



Pamela Baker

Texas native Pamela Baker has lived in Amarillo since age 5 and has dedicated her adult career to health care and nursing. In fact, she believes it is her responsibility, no matter what her assignment, to be "a strong patient advocate" and "to provide the best possible care."

Pam attended Amarillo College and then completed her LVN licensure degree at Clarendon College. She continues to take classes toward her RN licensure.

Before coming to work at Allergy A.R.T.S. in May 2005, she had been a cardiac critical care nurse at Northwest Texas Hospital, a community nurse, a charge nurse and a health unit coordinator.

"I have always respected how Dr. Saadeh cares for his patients and, as luck would have it, there was an opening here in infusion when I returned to nursing after helping my father through a terminal illness," she explained. Pam is currently a Research Coordinator with our affiliated Amarillo Center for Clinical Research (ACCR), where she screens, enrolls and coordinates research studies. "I love getting to know the patients and their families," she added.

Pam and her "wonderfully unselfish" husband Harold have two boys, Ryan (12) and Calan (7), along with a crazy little chi-wiener dog (part Chihuahua and part mini-dachshund) named Chico. The family spends a lot of time outdoors, camping, hunting and fishing, along with Boy Scout activities. Pam also likes reading suspense novels, doing needlework and crochet, and watching old black-and-white movies.

