



# Wartburg WELLNESS Watcher



WELLNESS NEWS from Dawn Wiegmann, RN

APRIL 2010

## April showers bring allergy sufferers

Breathing should be about the easiest thing you can do, but for some people it isn't. Whether you call it rose fever in the spring, hay fever in the fall, or year-round sensitivity to many other things, an allergy can make breathing very difficult.

Allergies can cause a host of symptoms. Nasal congestion is bad enough, but its sub-symptoms include mouth breathing, snoring, loss of taste or smell, and dark circles under the eyes. Some people have symptoms all year long because they are allergic to mold, dust mites, pets, and other indoor allergens.

Some relief from tree and plant allergies is found in simple steps, such as keeping windows closed and staying inside when pollen counts are high. Also, remember if you're tempted to open your windows one day and turn off your air, it can take over a week for your allergy sufferer to start breathing better.

Here are a few ways to find relief from allergies this spring:

- Avoid working, exercising, or sitting outside early in the day if you're prone to allergies. If grasses are a bother to you, wear a mask when you're cutting the grass.
- After you spend time outdoors, change your clothes and wash them to remove the allergens that are on them.
- Consider taking over-the-counter medications, such as antihistamines, to help ease symptoms. Beware of the drowsiness that might occur after taking these medications. Talk to your doctor about your allergies and how to treat them.



- If you have severe allergies, consider seeing an allergist and getting a skin test or blood test to determine your allergies. Once you know, you could undergo a series of allergy shots or, in some other allergy clinics, you can get treatment with sublingual drops for treatment.
- If you have pets, be sure to give them baths often to lessen allergens and pet dander on them. Do your research before you adopt a pet. Low dander cats may be available.
- Vacuum rugs and wash bedding often to remove allergens that could trigger your allergies.
- Try drinking two or three cups a day of green tea to bolster your body's defenses. Green tea blocks the biochemical process involved in producing an allergic response according to the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry. Green tea may be useful against a wide range of sneeze-starting allergens including pollen, pet dander, and dust.

### Is it a cold or allergies?

Many people may not realize they have allergies, often attributing their congestion and runny nose to a cold. It's important to distinguish between allergies and colds — here are some clues:

#### Colds

Runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, **unclear** nasal drainage, wheezing, sore throat, coughing, watery and itchy eyes, aches and pains, fever.

#### Allergies

Runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, **clear** nasal drainage, wheezing, coughing, watery and itchy eyes **with an itchy nose**, dark circles under eyes.



# Cancer: control your risk factors

Despite many advances in cancer treatment, each year more than 500,000 people in the United States die of cancer. And while some cancer risk factors, such as family history and inherited genes can't be prevented, many can. In fact, it's estimated that more than one-third of cancer-related deaths could be prevented with positive lifestyle changes.

Does your lifestyle put you at risk of cancer? Consider this list of proven and preventable cancer risk factors.

## Smoking

Each year, more than 180,000 Americans die of cancer that is related to using tobacco. This makes tobacco use the single most preventable cause of cancer death.



## Drinking alcohol

Heavy drinking (more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women) over many years increases your risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, larynx, liver, and breast.



## Sun exposure

More than one million skin cancers each year could be prevented by protecting your skin from exposure to the sun and avoiding tanning beds.

## Poor diet

A diet high in total calories, saturated fat, red and processed meats, salt, sugar, and fried foods increases your cancer risk.

## Inactivity

Getting 30 to 45 minutes of physical activity most days of the week can help you maintain a healthy weight and prevent cancer, especially breast and colon cancers.

## Overweight and obesity

The American Institute for Cancer Research estimates that 100,500 cancers a year can be attributed to overweight and obesity. Obesity has been linked to esophageal, pancreatic, colorectal, kidney, gallbladder, uterine, and breast cancers.

## Infectious diseases

Immunizations can help prevent infectious diseases related to Hepatitis B virus, which can cause liver cancer, and human papillomavirus (HPV), which can cause cervical cancer.

## Certain chemicals and other substances

Some construction workers, painters, and chemical industry workers have an increased risk of cancer because of their exposure to dangerous chemicals. Chemicals to watch out for include: asbestos, benzene, benzidine, cadmium, nickel, and vinyl chloride.

It's never too late to adopt healthy habits. Every positive change you make from this list can help decrease your risk of developing cancer!

Are you taking care of yourself and trying to keep a handle on your health and wellness?

Then it's the final chance to sign up for the **Wartburg Incentive Program!**

The deadline is here, so contact Dawn Wiegmann, RN, at dawn.wiegmann@wartburg.edu to get you signed up!

## Coming Events

**Tuesday, April 13**

**Lunch 'n' Learn  
Noon-1 p.m.**

**Colon Health/Cancer Screen**

The W athletic suites (across from Levick Arena), large round conference room

*Presented by Lisa Warne, MD, and Kerrie Bossard, MD*

**Saturday, May 1**

**Community Health and Wellness Fair**

Hall of Champions, The W

**8:30 a.m.-noon** —

**Area Farmers Market**

Entrance of The W

**9 a.m.-noon** — **Health Fair**

Upper level, The W

