



Your Health

A newsletter dedicated to student health issues at
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Spring 2005



Spring Allergies

Most folks living in Minnesota look forward to Spring—the lengthening days, increased sun, and warmer temps can do a lot to drive away the winter blahs. But for those who suffer from seasonal allergies, the arrival of spring can also mean the arrival of allergy symptoms like congestion, runny nose, frequent sneezing, itchy eyes/nose/roof of mouth, and cough. Allergens like pollen and mold can cause the allergy sufferer to produce histamine, leukotrienes, and other chemical substances that inflame tissues in the nose, sinuses, mouth, throat, and eyes. Reducing exposure to allergens can bring some relief and the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology offers the following suggestions:

- DO keep windows closed at night to prevent pollens or molds from drifting into your home. Air conditioning cleans, cools, and dries the air.
- Do minimize early morning activity when pollen is usually emitted between 5 and 10:00 a.m.
- Do keep your car windows closed when traveling.
- DO stay indoors when the pollen count or humidity is reported to be high, and on windy days when dust and pollen are blown about.
- DO take a vacation during the height of the pollen season to a more pollen-free area, such as the beach or sea.
- DO take medications prescribed by your allergist/immunologist regularly, in the recommended dosage.
- DON'T take more medication than recommended in an attempt to lessen your symptoms.
- DON'T mow lawns or be around freshly cut grass; mowing stirs up pollens and molds.
- DON'T rake leaves, as this also stirs up molds.
- DON'T hang sheets or clothing out to dry. Pollens and molds may collect in them.
- DON'T grow too many, or overwater, indoor plants if you are allergic to mold. Wet soil encourages mold growth

Get some great ZZZZ's

Recent survey data indicates that some MSU students are in serious need of some shut-eye: almost 22% of MSU students reported that sleep difficulties caused them to receive an incomplete, drop a class, or receive a lower grade in a class or on a paper/project. Parlay International offers some tips to help everyone get a better night's sleep:

Things to Avoid Before Bed: caffeine after 5 p.m., heavy meals late in the evening, unnecessary medications that keep you awake, alcohol, heavy exercise, arguments or stressful situations, afternoon naps

Things to Do Before Bed: take an evening stroll, take a warm bath, count sheep, try a light snack, work a crossword puzzle or read, meditate, listen to soothing music, practice relaxation techniques

Establish a Routine: get daily exercise, go to bed at about the same time each night, follow the same bedtime routine each night such as brushing your teeth and reading a book, use your bedroom only for sleep and sex, keep your room dark during sleep, minimize noise and other distractions by using white noise or earplugs.



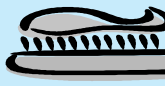
Take a deep breath...

Place your hand on your chest. Breathe so that you feel your chest moving in and out against your hand. This is chest breathing, a shallow form of breathing that often occurs as a response to stress.

Now place your hand on your stomach below your waist. Use your abdominal muscles to breathe, so your stomach moves in and out against your hand. This is abdominal, or deep breathing, the kind of breathing you did naturally as a baby and still do when you're asleep or very calm. Slow deep breathing reverses your body's stress response to anxiety, slows the heart and brings blood pressure to normal. Take some time to practice deep breathing every day, especially when you're under stress



- +Begin by breathing in slowly through your nose.
- +Remember to use your abdominal muscles.
- +Breathe in slowly for a count of four.
- +Pause for a count of one.
- +Then breathe out slowly for a count of four, letting the air escape through pursed lips.
- +Check your chest and shoulder muscles during breathing. They should be relaxed and relatively still.



Brushin' Up on Dental Health

Taking care of those pearly whites is pretty important if you want to keep them looking their best. The basics of good dental care includes proper brushing:

- Choose the right type of toothbrush. Most dentists recommend a soft, round-end bristle toothbrush that can comfortably reach all the parts of your mouth.
- Use a paste or gel that contains fluoride when you brush. A dab the size of a pea is usually enough.
- Instead of brushing back-and-forth, use a small, circular motion with the bristles of the brush at a 45-degree angle to the teeth
- Don't "scrub" your teeth. Brushing too hard can damage the enamel and the soft tissue around your teeth.
- Be sure to get all those hard-to-reach places, like behind the back teeth.
- Your tongue is a favorite hang out for bacteria that can cause bad breath so it's a good idea to give it a good brushing, too!
- Brush at least twice a day and replace your toothbrush every three to four months (or sooner if it appears worn).

Brushing alone isn't enough to keep your smile healthy. You need to floss, too. Flossing helps remove bacteria and plaque from places your toothbrush just can't reach. The American Dental Hygienists' Association offers proper flossing instructions:

- Wind 18" of floss around middle fingers of each hand. Pinch floss between thumbs and index fingers, leaving a 1"-2" length in between. Use thumbs to direct floss between upper teeth.
- Keep a 1"-2" length of floss stretched between fingers. Use index fingers to guide floss between contacts of the lower teeth.
- Gently guide floss between the teeth by using a zig-zag motion. Don't snap the floss between your teeth. Curve the floss around the side of the tooth.
- Slide floss up and down against the tooth surface and under the gumline. Floss each tooth thoroughly with a clean section of floss.
- Use dental floss at least once each day.

Regular visits to a dental office for an exam and cleaning are also important components of dental health. The MSU Dental Clinic, located on campus in the lower level of Morris Hall, is open to the public and offers many dental health services. For more information about the Dental Clinic services or to schedule an appointment call 389-2147.

MSU STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

APPOINTMENTS
&
INFORMATION
389-6276

HEALTH EDUCATION
389-5689

PHARMACY
389-2483

NURSE LINE
389-6710

OR VISIT US AT:
WWW.MNSU.EDU/SHS

REAL DOCTORS.
REAL NURSES.
REAL CONVENIENCE
ON CAMPUS.

CARKOSKI COMMONS
LOWER LEVEL

CHECK OUT THESE COOL
WEB SITES:

www.bettersleep.org

www.4collegewomen.org

www2.bc.edu/~ganjamie/hardey_underground.html

HPV Infection Common in Young Adults

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections in young adults. Some research studies estimate that between 75 to 80% of sexually active individuals have had an HPV infection, most just didn't know it. The two most common signs of HPV infection are genital warts and abnormal Pap smears.

The appearance of warts on the genitals varies but the most common is a flesh-colored, raised "cauliflower" type wart. Genital warts can appear on and around the genital area including in and around the vaginal opening, on the cervix, on the penis and scrotum, and in and around the anus.

A sign of HPV infection in women is an abnormal Pap smear. The cells of the cervix (the lower part of the uterus that protrudes into the vagina) seem to be vulnerable to abnormal changes when exposed to certain types of HPV. These abnormal changes are detected by a Pap smear, a lab test that uses a sample of cells from the cervix.

Recent research has provided valuable additional information about HPV infection but many questions remain. Some infections are transmitted sexually. Some infections may have been acquired through non-sexual activities. Some HPV infections become apparent soon after infection. Some infections have a long latency period. And many people infected with HPV never knew they were infected--thought to be the result of an immune system that very effectively managed the infection.

HPV treatment varies according to symptoms and is best left to knowledgeable health care professionals. For more information about HPV check out this web site: www.ASHA.org

This document is available in alternate format to individuals with disabilities by calling the MSU Health Education office at 507-389-5689