

“Dear Dr. McCollough”... Practical Answers for Every Body

An interactive journey *through your body* with Dr. E. Gaylon McCollough.

Dear Dr. McCollough: Lately, I just don't seem to have the energy to get through the day. I have been told that this could be caused by allergies. Is this true?

Dear Reader: When you feel badly and your doctors can't seem to find anything wrong with you, you ought to consider allergy as the cause of your symptoms.

While food allergies are with us throughout the year, inhalant allergies tend to be seasonal. Spring is when trees, plants and flowers are all in bloom, and pollen carried by the wind, ends up everywhere. Immune cells in our body tissues react to the pollen by releasing histamine, a chemical that causes fluids to leak out of our bloodstream and into the tissues. This can cause a number of symptoms.

Symptoms caused by allergies may include any or all of the following: swelling, redness, sneezing, watery eyes, feeling tired, inability to concentrate, bloating, cramping, gastrointestinal disorders, hay fever, and a variety of “unexplained” symptoms.

In order to determine if allergies are contributing to your overall sense of feeling badly, it is essential that you and your doctor have a high level of suspicion. A history of symptoms often associated with allergies or unexplained complaints, is reason enough to perform **allergy testing**. Today, a simple blood test can identify more than one hundred causes of allergic symptoms. However, if no one asks, the likelihood of identifying the problem is highly unlikely.

When the tests are completed, the doctor can recommend which substances you might need to avoid by changing your diet, stopping use of certain products, and in fact, changing your lifestyle. In some cases, it may take additional testing and long-term treatment by a trained allergist in order to achieve the best results. Your doctor can make that recommendation, if he/she feels either is advisable.

In order to help you better understand what an “allergy” actually is and what causes it, I have included the following terms and their definitions.

An “*antibody*” is a protein specifically produced by the body, to fight off or neutralize an “*antigen*,” something that the body has identified as harmful to it. The “antigen” may be a food, pollen, or product to which the body has determined it has become “allergic.” It might also be a cream, lotion, soap, cologne, fabric, pet, or household-cleaning agent.

An allergy is acquired, which means *one does not, generally, experience an allergic reaction to a substance the first time it is encountered.* It may take multiple

exposures...over many years...before sufficient anti-bodies are manufactured by the immune system to cause the first reaction. Alarming, however, with each subsequent exposure, the allergic reaction may become more severe, and in some cases, may cause life-threatening symptoms...or death.

As is the case with other medical conditions, early detection is the better route to pursue. Measuring the presence of antibodies in one's blood stream and cells with a laboratory test is a way to determine if you have an allergy problem, and to which substances you may be allergic.

If you would like any more information on this or other health related topics, call the McCollough Institute for Appearance and Health at 251-967-7600, email info@mccolloughinstitute.com or visit our website www.mccolloughplasticsurgery.com. If you would like to ask Dr. McCollough a question, please submit the question using our online contact form at <http://www.mccolloughplasticsurgery.com/contactus.html>.

WARNING**If you suspect that you are having an “allergic reaction,” especially one, which produces extreme redness, swelling, or shortness of breath, you should contact the emergency medical system (911) or go directly to a doctor’s office or emergency room.***