

ALLERGIES/POLLEN

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Spring and summer can bring asthma attacks for individuals who are allergic to pollens. Of all the things that can cause an allergy, pollen is the most pervasive.

BACKGROUND

- In the Pacific Northwest, trees, grasses and weeds are the major sources of pollen allergies. Evergreen trees such as pine, juniper, cedar, alder, poplar, cottonwood and aspen produce 10-1,000 times more pollen per tree than the flowering cherry tree. Grasses that are problematic in the Northwest include: timothy, Bermuda, orchard, meadow fescue, rye and bluegrass. The west side of the state is less problematic than Eastern Washington because sea breezes keep allergens moving inland.
- People may inherit a tendency to be allergic.
- Asthma may recur each year during pollen season and can eventually become chronic. If wheezing, shortness of breath or other asthma symptoms accompany the signs of allergies (sneezing, itching and watering eyes, nose, mouth and throat), medical attention to control allergies is needed.
- Approaches to treatment of pollen allergy include: avoidance of the allergen, medication to relieve the symptoms or injection treatments (allergy shots)

ASSESSMENT

- Ask if the participant knows if he/she has an allergy to pollen or if symptoms get worse every spring or summer.
- Has skin testing been done to determine which pollens are responsible?
- Does the participant have medication to relieve the allergy symptoms?

EDUCATIONAL MESSAGES

- Allergies can make asthma worse. Sometimes, the best treatment for hard-to-control asthma can be treating uncontrolled allergies.
- If you have uncontrolled allergies, it is important to see your doctor to get them treated and to reduce exposure to the pollens.
- Allergies to pollen, which are most prevalent in spring and summer, can trigger asthma attacks.

- Pollen allergy symptoms include: sneezing along with a runny or congested nose, itching, inflamed & watering eyes, itching nose or throat.
- People may inherit a tendency to be allergic. No cure for pollen allergy has been found.
- Treatment of pollen allergies include: avoiding the allergen, medication to relieve symptoms and/or allergy shots.
- You can find out current pollen levels in the newspaper or on-line.
- During periods of high pollen levels, avoid exposure to other irritants which can aggravate the symptoms of pollen allergy. These irritants include: dust, insect sprays, tobacco smoke, air pollution and fresh tar or paint.
- Exposure to pollen can also be reduced by:
 - Keeping windows closed at night.
 - Limiting morning activity (between 5 and 10am) when pollen is usually emitted.
 - Keeping car windows closed when traveling.
 - Trying to stay inside when pollen count or humidity is high and on windy days when dust and pollen are blown around.
 - Taking any medication prescribed for allergy/asthma regularly and in the correct dose.
 - Not mowing lawns or being around freshly cut grass.
 - Not hanging sheets or clothing outdoors to dry as pollens collect on them.
 - Household dust contains pollens. Dust regularly in order to minimize the dust and pollen in your environment.
 - After being outdoors during high-pollen periods, change clothes and take a shower upon arriving home for the day. Shower and wash your hair every night to avoid bringing pollens into your bed. Wash your hands frequently.

ACTIONS

CHW ACTIONS	PARTICIPANT ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach about the connection between pollen allergy and asthma. • Teach about reducing exposure to pollens. • Show how to find current pollen levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be skin tested if appropriate and desired. • Take medications as prescribed for allergy and asthma.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine if the participant is taking allergy & asthma medicines correctly. • Offer skin testing if appropriate. • Refer participant to his/her provider for further evaluation/medication to address symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check pollen levels if you are allergic and planning to be outdoors a lot. • Take preventive measures to avoid pollen exposure when possible. • See provider if allergy symptoms are not well controlled.
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FOLLOW-UP VISITS

SUPPLIES

EDUCATION HANDOUTS

REFERRALS