

Families[®] upon Thames

The FREE magazine for families with young children living in the boroughs of Richmond, Kingston, Epsom, Hounslow and Spelthorne

FREE

Festive wellbeing



Allergy alert

Those cold symptoms you are having could actually be an allergic reaction to Christmas! Alison Besales from **Allergy Matters** tells us that everything from your Christmas tree to those nice-smelling scented candles could be the culprit. It can be a tough season for those with allergies, but with a little extra care, you can make it a safe and happy holiday for you and your children!

At this time of year families spend time together. Children go to visit their grandparents; aunts and uncles come to stay. As a result, there are many problems that the allergic child may encounter around now. Here are some of the main trouble spots and ways in which you can be prepared.

DUST MITE ALLERGY

Problem: When a dust-mite sensitive or asthmatic child goes to stay in another house, particularly with older relatives, the allergens that they encounter can trigger a major reaction, which can ruin your holiday. Dust mite allergy affects 85% of asthmatics, and warm, cluttered carpeted homes are a perfect breeding ground for these horros. Not only can dust mites trigger asthma, but also severe sinusitis, runny noses, and sneezing and itchy, inflamed eyes.

And what about all those Christmas decorations? Artificial trees and their decorations accumulate a lot of dust mites, having been packed away in the loft or other dusty areas for most of the year.

Solution:

⊕ Be prepared with Aller-Rx Allergen denaturing spray. It is safe, non-toxic, and can be used on furniture, curtains, clothes, carpets and bedding.

⊕ Don't forget to pack dust mite proof sheets. No allergic child should sleep over without these!

⊕ Use plastic, metal or glass decorations that cannot hold dust mites.

⊕ Wash fabric decorations in hot soapy water each year before displaying.

PET ALLERGY

Problem: Staying in a house with animals is fun, particularly for an animal-allergic child who is not allowed to have a pet of their own. Unfortunately, cuddles can lead to itchy red patches, breathlessness, runny noses, sneezing and red swollen eyes.

Solution:

⊕ Ask if the pet can be shampooed prior to your visit, in an allergen-neutralising sham-

po. This can prevent a reaction to the pet for up to 30 days.

⊕ Also, washing the pet's bedding in an allergen-neutralising laundry detergent can have an enormous impact on the amount of pet dander in the environment. The spray form of Aller-Rx can be used on sofas for further benefit.

FOOD ALLERGY

Problem: Christmas is an especially dangerous time for those with food allergies. All those cakes and other treats are so tempting, making the chance of accidental ingestion easy.

When a child has a severe food allergy, the immediate family are usually aware and careful. As a parent, you screen all food that you buy to ensure that no danger zone products enter the house. But when you are away from home, or when people bring you food gifts, extra care must be taken to ensure that these foods are safe for your child. The most common food allergens to watch out for are: milk, egg, peanut, tree nut (walnut, cashew, etc), fish, shellfish, soy and wheat.

Solution:

⊕ Although avoidance is the best way to handle food allergies, it may not always be possible. Using an antihistamine before a party could help prevent or reduce a reaction, but this is no guarantee.

⊕ Carefully check all your Christmas food ingredients. Many of these seasonal foods contain nuts and other problem foods.

⊕ If the allergy is severe, ensure that you always have an epi-pen to hand. Talk to your doctor about this.

⊕ Make sure all relatives know about and understand the severity of the allergy, so that they don't unwittingly offer problem food.

ASTHMA

Problem: Long car journeys can cause problems for asthmatics; the levels of pollutants within a car can be higher than that experienced by cyclists. Add to this the excitement, the trigger foods, smoking guests, smoke

from fireplaces, pets, all these can result in an asthma attack. With asthma, it is imperative to deal with an attack as soon as it starts, as it can precipitate very quickly.

Solution:

⊕ Use a HEPA car air filter, this will reduce the levels of pollutants and dust within the car and will reduce car sickness too! This model can also be used in the house with its mains adapter, to help with domestic irritants.

⊕ Make sure that you minimise the triggers, and monitor your child's medication, to be prepared for the onset of an attack. An asthma attack can be avoided by carefully adjusting your child's doses when required. Ask your doctor for individual advice, so that you know exactly how much of each inhaler you can give in 24 hours.

⊕ Ask relatives to avoid burning wood while someone with asthma is visiting, or avoid visiting those homes.

⊕ It is also a great relief to have a home nebulizer. Formerly standard-issue hospital nebulizers were only available to the very few. Now it is possible to buy one of these mini-ultrasonic nebulizers for £114. Your doctor will be able to prescribe the nebulizer for home use.

⊕ The spacers need not be the bulky contraptions prescribed either. Our mini spacers hinge open to keep your puffer nearby inside, and they make a musical note to train your child to breathe the right way. Another way to monitor your child's condition is regular use of a peak flow meter. It is a good way to spot when their breathing capacity is under threat.

ALLERGIC RHINITIS

Problem: For many people, one of the most evocative things about Christmas is the lovely piney smell of a fresh-cut Christmas tree. Unfortunately, Christmas trees can harbour a lot of moulds and pollens, and for those who have allergic rhinitis, they can create the miserable feeling of itchy, watery eyes and a constantly dripping nose.

Solution: Before bringing the tree into the house, spray it down with water and let it dry.

THE PROBLEM WITH SCENTS

Those with fragrance sensitivity suffer more at Christmas. Strongly scented potpourri and scented candles can lead to non-stop sneezing! Are you affected?

Go to www.allergymatters.com for more tips on an allergy-free life, plus innovative, tried and tested products.

