



BROWN MEDICINE

Insider

Summer 2024

How to Manage Allergy Season

As summer approaches, many people face the unwelcome return of seasonal allergies.



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The increased presence of pollen from trees, grasses, and weeds trigger symptoms in those sensitive to them. This ranges from sneezing, itchy and watery eyes, runny or congested nose, and throat irritation. Seasonal allergies (also known as allergic rhinitis) can range from mild to moderate symptoms to more severe symptoms which may require treatment.

To combat these symptoms, several treatment options are available, ranging from lifestyle adjustments to medications. Over-the-counter (OTC) antihistamines, such as Allegra (fexofenadine), Claritin (loratadine), and Zyrtec (cetirizine) are available in brand name or generic versions and are generally helpful in combating mild to moderate allergy symptoms. It is recommended to avoid older antihistamine medications such as Benadryl (diphenhydramine) or Allergy Relief (chlorpheniramine) as these active ingredients may make you drowsy. If taking OTC antihistamines, the newer agents (fexofenadine, loratadine, cetirizine) have little to no drowsiness associated with them (ranked in order of least likelihood of drowsiness) and are generally safe to use as self-treatment.

Use of an OTC intranasal corticosteroid, such as Flonase (fluticasone propionate nasal spray), may be helpful for moderate to severe symptoms of seasonal allergies. Some studies have found that intranasal corticosteroids are more effective than oral antihistamines for treatment of seasonal allergies and should be considered first line treatment. Examples of OTC nasal corticosteroid sprays include Flonase (fluticasone propionate), Nasacort (triamcinolone acetonide), and Rhinocort (budesonide). It is best to avoid Afrin (oxymetazoline) products, as this ingredient can cause you to rely on the medication and may cause nasal congestion to recur or worsen when discontinuing therapy.

Congestion in your nose may require an oral decongestant agent, such as Sudafed (pseudoephedrine) which is available without a prescription behind the pharmacy counter and purchased with a valid license, state ID, or passport. The ingredient pseudoephedrine is shown to work well for alleviating congestion symptoms in the nose, chest, or head, and should be used only as needed. If you have uncontrolled high blood pressure, check with your healthcare provider before use of pseudoephedrine, as this medication may slightly raise your blood pressure. If your blood pressure is well-controlled naturally or with the use of medication, this may be a safe option to use as needed for nasal congestion.

A helpful tip: Don't confuse Sudafed (pseudoephedrine) which is available behind the pharmacy counter (with a valid ID), with the OTC versions found in the store aisles. OTC medication such as Sudafed PE (ingredient: phenylephrine), differs from pseudoephedrine, and is found to have little to no benefit on treatment of nasal congestion. Always be sure to check the ingredients and ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider for advice on which products to select.

Keeping an eye on the pollen forecast and current pollen levels is essential. When the forecast predicts high levels of pollen, taking allergy medication before symptoms start can be very effective. Additionally, reducing exposure to allergens will make a significant difference. Stay inside on dry, windy days, and change clothes immediately after being outdoors. Avoid lawn mowing, gardening, and other outdoor chores that can stir up allergens. Removing yourself from exposure to known triggers will help to prevent symptoms from developing or worsening during this season.

There are ways to limit allergens in your home as well. Use air conditioning if you have it, and keep the air dry with a dehumidifier. Using a portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter in rooms you frequent can also make a big difference. Regularly cleaning floors with a vacuum equipped with a HEPA filter can help keep indoor air clean. Be sure to keep the filters clean and change them regularly.

It's crucial to consult with a healthcare provider to tailor the treatment to your specific needs, especially if OTC medications are insufficient. For some, prescription options may be recommended to provide long-term relief. Speak with your healthcare team if you feel like self-management has been ineffective to discuss further options.

As we navigate through this allergy season, understanding and managing symptoms can significantly improve quality of life. By leveraging a combination of medication and environmental controls, individuals can enjoy the warmer months with fewer disruptions from allergy symptoms.

Other helpful tips during allergy season are:

- Vacuum floors often (your mattress too!)
- Wash bedding weekly
- Clean out your medicine cabinet. Get rid of expired OTC!
- Replace air filters
- Look for signs of pests – especially cockroaches

CELEBRATING OUR TEAM:

Employee Appreciation Week at Brown Medicine

Last month, Brown Medicine celebrated Employee Appreciation Week. This was an opportunity for the organization to come together, recognizing the collective achievements and remarkable impact made by everyone in our community. The week consisted of trivia, ice cream, and food trucks for employees to enjoy. **We are so proud of their hard work and dedication to our organization and healthcare in Rhode Island.**





Pictured left to right: Joshua Lussier, Dr. Stephanie Catanese, Roberta Neves, Melinda Diaz.
Not pictured: Drs. Cheston Cunha and Aman Nanda

Leadership Academy Graduates

We're thrilled to announce that **six of our Brown Medicine employees graduated from BPI Leadership Academy on June 7th.**

The four-month program focuses on developing core leadership skills essential for thriving in an academic medical center, all while keeping patient care as the primary focus.

Participants completed a rigorous, business-oriented Capstone Project, which they presented to Senior Management, their colleagues, and Academy alumni.

We are immensely proud of their commitment and effort.



Employee of the Quarter

Brown Medicine's Employee of the Quarter for January – March 2024 is **Erin Tetreault**. Erin is a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) at our East Providence Primary Care office as well as the trainer for all new Medical Assistants. Erin utilizes excellent clinical judgment in ways that **enhance patient care and streamline the workday** and has assumed new duties in quality improvement for the practice.

Thank you, Erin, for your amazing work!



Pictured left to right: Conner Lofstrom and Douglas Osier Jr.



Brown Medicine Celebrates Conner Lofstrom

By Douglas Osier Jr. - Manager of Analytics

We are thrilled to celebrate the recent accomplishments of **Conner Lofstrom**, intern in the Department of Analytics at Brown Medicine. Conner was recently **recognized as Male Athlete of the Year at Bryant University**. This remarkable achievement is a testament to his dedication and hard work, both in and out of the pool. As a key member of the swim team at Bryant University, he has demonstrated exceptional athletic prowess and a commitment to teamwork. In addition to his athletic endeavors, he has been **making significant contributions to our analytics team**. His ability to balance his academic responsibilities, athletic commitments, and professional development as an intern with us is truly commendable. Conner has recently completed one year with Brown Medicine, and we are happy that he will continue with us through his senior year at Bryant. We are proud to have such a dedicated and talented individual on our team.

Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition!

EVENTS

Juneteenth Festival and PRIDE

Several members of our Brown Medicine team had a great time at RI PRIDE and Juneteenth Festival in Providence representing Brown Physicians, Inc.

It was great to connect with so many individuals in the community and celebrate together.



Pictured left to right: Katie Sharkey, MD (Sleep Medicine), LaNeir Johnson, NP (Internal Medicine)



Pictured left to right: LaNeir Johnson, NP (Internal Medicine), Diane Metz (Infectious Diseases), Kyla Dewar, MD (Internal Medicine)



Pictured left to right: Joanne Kovich and Stephanie Araujo



Pictured left to right: Amanda Gomes, Heidi Orellana Lopez, Abigail Thistle, and Rhonda Smith



Governor McKee Nominates Dr. Jerome M. Larkin as Director of RIDOH

Governor Dan McKee has nominated Dr. Jerome Larkin as the next director of the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH). Dr. Larkin is an associate professor of clinical medicine at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University with over 30 years of experience in healthcare.

He is board certified in both internal medicine and pediatrics, as well as adult infectious disease. From 2010-20 was co-director of the pediatric HIV Clinic at Hasbro Children’s Hospital, according to his online biography.

“Dr. Larkin is a proven leader in the medical field and his experience will be a vital asset to our team and to the people of Rhode Island,” McKee stated in a press release. “Improving health outcomes for all Rhode Islanders is a top priority for our administration and I’m confident that Dr. Larkin will help us reach that goal.”

Brown Medicine is proud of Dr. Larkin’s achievement and looks forward to the positive impact he will have in this role. We are excited to see the advancements in public health that will come under his leadership.

BROWN MEDICINE IS A NONPROFIT, ACADEMIC, MULTI-SPECIALTY MEDICAL GROUP WITH LOCATIONS TO SERVE PATIENTS THROUGHOUT RHODE ISLAND.



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