

medical sciences

Gathered at the 25th annual congress of
The American College of Allergists in Washington, D.C.

ASTHMA

Allergist stops use of inhalants

The overuse of inhalants, called aerosol nebulizers, has caused some allergists to discontinue their use entirely.

At least two speakers at the meeting suggested taking them off the market even when prescribed by physicians. Some of them are obtainable without prescription.

Dr. William S. Eisenstadt of Minneapolis reported a study in which 15 patients had a particularly impressive and dramatic improvement of their bronchial asthma after they stopped using nebulizers. Not only were they able to discontinue the inhalants, they could lower their doses of corticosteroids. There was also a trend toward less respiratory infection.

Dr. Irvin Caplin of Indianapolis reported similar experiences. He teaches his patients to give themselves injections of epinephrine at home and to discontinue the inhaler completely. They take shots every few weeks. Patients who have to go to the hospital with acute attacks are often seen "clutching their nebulizers for dear life." More harm is done by inhalants than by corticosteroids, he says.

KISSING BUG

Southwestern insect causes allergy

The kissing bug, or triatoma, is found most often in the southwestern part of the United States, but it is not confined to that area. From New Jersey to Florida, westward through the southern states, the Mississippi Valley, through Texas and on to California, this insect is causing trouble.

Dr. A. Ford Wolf of the Scott and White Clinic in Temple, Tex., says it is the bug's saliva that causes allergic response. Massive swelling may develop at the site where the person is bitten, but the swelling may occur in the face, lips or eyelids, even though they are far from the original bite.

The triatoma is a dark brownish-gray to black insect, which is three-fourths to one-and-a-fourth inches long. The adult is black with striking orange markings on its folded wings. It hides on or about the bed, and is often called a Mexican bedbug.

The danger lies in the fact that 33 to 90 percent of the bugs harbor the trypanosomes of Chagas' disease, which can be fatal. Treatment is by desensitization, injectable epinephrine and antihistamines.

FOOD ADDITIVES

Thousands of chemicals

Although food additives include chemicals for nutritional purposes and preservation of quality, synthetic flavors and coloring ingredients often cause reactions in hypersensitive persons.

Dr. Ben F. Feingold of the Kaiser Foundation Hospital in San Francisco pointed out that among 34 chemi-

cals listed as Food, Drug and Cosmetic colors, 11 are coal tar dyes. Some persons get skin eruptions called urticaria, itching called pruritis or asthma from these dyes.

Synthetic flavors include 1,610 chemicals, while the group of natural flavors includes 502, making a total of 2,112 chemicals. Some of them can cause allergic conditions such as rhinitis, or a dripping nose, nasal polyps, a cough, throat swelling, asthma, skin lesions and various gastrointestinal and neurological symptoms, including headaches and behavioral disturbances.

NEUROLOGIC ALLERGY

Disorders are common

Some people can't take alcohol even in small amounts without experiencing a crying jag.

Dr. Marshall Mandell, assistant professor of allergy at the New York Medical College, told of a 42-year-old woman patient who became extremely tired and wept pathetically after a single drink.

Another patient's reaction to alcohol tests was complete loss of memory, with mood swings from silliness and restlessness to a state of withdrawal.

The human brain is an extremely complex allergic shock tissue, easily reached by way of its blood supply that carries inhaled and ingested excitants from the afflicted person's environment.

Dr. Mandell says hypersensitivity to inhalants, foods and environmental chemicals is frequently mistaken for disorders of a psychiatric nature. He says "ecologic mental illness often goes unrecognized because emotional factors are generally believed to be the causes of mental and behavioral symptoms."

CHOCOLATE SENSITIVITY

An oversold allergy

Chocolate has been high on the list of offending foods eaten by allergic children, but tests done by Dr. Lawrence Maslansky of Albert Einstein College of Medicine indicate that it has been wrongly accused.

Out of a group of 500 allergic patients, only 10 showed that they were sensitive to chocolate after a double-blind study in which placebos and de-fatted chocolate were given in capsule form.

The same 500 persons had shown an incidence of 67 percent positive skin tests to chocolate.

"The disparity between skin test, provocative double-blind feeding and clinical symptoms indicates the need for a reappraisal of our present methods of diagnosing food allergy," Dr. Maslansky says. "Many physicians, and most laymen, accept chocolate allergy as an undisputed fact, when in reality there is very little scientific material to confirm this belief."

The average chocolate bar's total weight is only five to eight percent chocolate, the rest being sugar, milk solids, flavorings and other material, with no connection to allergy, he points out.

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