

WHAT'S UP DOC PETE?

Last week I heard your radio interview with Dr. Rea who discussed environmental hypersensitivity. Is this the same as allergies?



Peter J. Muran, MD

Early in his career as a cardiac surgeon, Dr. Rea observed his patients reacting to the materials placed in the body for cardiac repair. Over the years he became involved in the ever increasing number of abnormal reactions of people to organic and inorganic substances - everything from foods to fabrics and materials, to chemicals and pollutants in the air. He named these reactions "sensitivities".

Dr. Rea attributes our rapidly expanding sensitivities to the increased stress on our immune system caused by increased exposure to toxins. More than 80,000 chemicals alone have been introduced into our environment since World War II and approximately 2,000 more are added each year. The body is simply not prepared for this assault and begins to react to both these synthetic and natural exposures.

Classically, *allergies* cause a measurable immune response, while *sensitivities* may not. However, the effects and treatment of both are very similar. Allergies and sensitivities can cause headaches, sneezing, runny or itchy nose, watery and itchy eyes, stuffy nose, scratchy throat, itchy, red ears, post nasal drip, disturbed sleep, inability to concentrate, fatigue, poor mood, skin rashes and irritation, and joint pain. When the burden of these sensitivities raises past a certain threshold, the symptoms can be so great that it is difficult for one to function normally.

The first step is to identify what is causing the reactions. Identification can be a challenge without the assistance of a healthcare professional, as symptoms may not appear for 24-48 hours after exposure. Next, avoid exposure. It is easier to control exposure to foods than exposure to air-borne elements, but limiting one's exposure of the things that *can* be controlled will reduce the overall burden and thus the severity of one's reactions to those things which are more difficult to avoid.

Ultimately, the medical treatments available, conventional, integrated or alternative are intended to strengthen the immune system and restore balance to your internal terrain. This Saturday, our radio series on allergies will continue with Dr. Nick Lamoth, who will discuss a non-invasive, energetic technique that has had great success in eliminating sensitivity reactions.



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