

# MAC's CORNER

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Scott McPherson M.D.

## Flu Shots

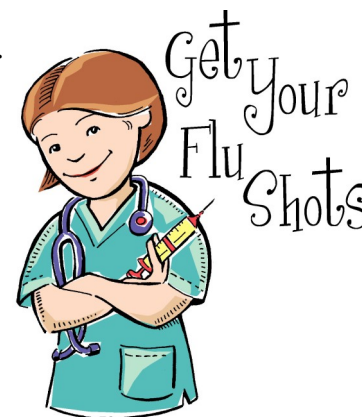
### Inside this issue:

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Allergies   | 2 |
| Diabetes    | 2 |
| Head Lice   | 2 |
| Flu vs Cold | 3 |
| Hobbies     | 3 |

Influenza is a disease that impacts the entire world every year. The World Health Organization has surveillance sites around the world with a goal to prepare as well as possible for the prevalent influenza viruses each year. This aids in preparing the most appropriate influenza vaccine each year. Influenza may change from one year to the next and even within the same year. This tendency to mutate makes the preparation of vaccines more difficult. It also explains why, some years, the vaccine seems ineffective. Nevertheless, influenza is a viral disease that can

cause severe illness. People with reduced immunity, elderly, and infants are usually at the greatest risk. We are able to vaccinate nearly everyone from 6 months of age through elder adult and because of mutations, it is necessary to be vaccinated each year. In the US, we typically begin vaccinations in September. Influenza outbreaks may occur at any time, however. In 1918, the devastating pandemic influenza actually was first seen in the summer months. In that year millions died, worldwide, even as the US entered World War

I. Today we vaccinate and we hope never to see such a dangerous pandemic again. Get your influenza vaccination NOW and if you are over 65 you may consider getting a HIGH DOSE vaccine for even greater protection.



## Allergies

Sneezing? Sniffing?  
Watery itchy eyes?  
You may have allergies and the Fall can be one of the worst times of the year for allergy suf-

ferers. It isn't just annoying for some people. Allergies may trigger asthma symptoms that can turn serious.

The most common allergens include pollens, dust, molds, animal dander, and foods. We can become allergic to just one type of allergen or to many. Knowing what you

## Allergies (Continued)

are allergic to may help you avoid contact with them (don't buy a dog if you are allergic to them) but, in the Fall, many allergens are floating around us everywhere we go.

There are three primary types of medicine that help with allergy symptoms; 1. Antihistamines (Benadryl, Claritin, Allegra, Zyrtec) 2. Nasal Steroid Inhalers (Nasocort, Flonase), 3. Leukotriene inhibitors (Singulair). Happily, the first two

may be purchased without a prescription. If they manage your symptoms you may not need anything else. These medications are generally safe if you follow the package instructions. The side effects are few but knowing them also helps.

Start with one antihistamine (and stick with it for a couple of weeks). If your symptoms are improved but you still have congestion, add nasal

steroids. Getting a jump on pollens in the Spring may help and, likewise, if your allergies start in the Fall, start ahead of time. If you still don't see improvement, see your family physician. The third option may add one measure of benefit. You may need a referral to an allergist, who can test you to find out what you are allergic to and use injections to desensitize you to the substances to which you are allergic.

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## Diabetes

Have you been diagnosed with diabetes? There are many things to learn about this disease and many people are diagnosed each year. Don't ignore this disease. You may feel fine, even when your blood sugar is high. This disease is about your body's ability to manage sugar but what it does is hurt your blood

vessels. It may affect the eyes, the heart, or the kidneys. Because the disease hurts blood vessels it can affect any part of the body. Please see your doctor regularly. Keep this disease under control. It may help you live a longer happier and physically better life.

I MAY HAVE DIABETES...  
BUT DIABETES DOES  
NOT HAVE ME

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## Head Lice

Everyone starts to itch at the mention of head lice but as kids are back in school, we start to see more people calling about this gross subject. No parent wants to find those little critters crawling in their child's curly locks. Head lice can be easily passed from one person to another and it DOES NOT imply that anyone is unclean or has poor sanitary habits.

Head lice live on the scalp, in the

hair and lay eggs in "nits" on individual hairs. Most home remedies are less than effective. Permethrin is the mainstay of treatment today and is available over-the-counter. More concentrated products are available by prescription from your physician. This treatment is capable of killing the lice and the eggs if applied properly.

To treat for lice, apply the solution or cream to the hair as directed. Cleaning the bedding and night clothing (use the hottest settings and turn up the water heater if possible) lessens recurrence. Sometimes, in difficult cases, repeating the treatment after 2 weeks is needed too.

## Flu vs a Cold

Every year when fall arrives so do colds. Just about the time winter hits we start to see influenza as well. A cold is distinctly different from the flu. A cold is caused by one of MANY viruses that lead to very similar symptoms: Watery, itchy eyes; runny nose; sore throat; cough. If you have the sniffles and a sore throat without a fever, you may not need to seek medical attention. Colds usually run their course in 4-5 days and fade away. There is no medication that can eradicate a common cold. Most medications just lessen the effect of the symp-

toms.

Influenza is much more likely to lead to a fever, though you may get all of the above symptoms, they will be more intense. Influenza usually hits suddenly and hard. Chills and body aches are more likely with influenza. Headache and feeling significant fatigue are hallmarks as well.

For influenza, waiting is not necessary. If you become intensely ill with influenza, your physician may be able to prescribe you a medica-

tion that will actually shorten the duration of the symptoms and lessen their impact. It has to be started in the first 72 hours to really help, though. If you believe you had influenza with aches, chills, cough and headache, call your doctor sooner rather than later.



## Hobbies

Hobbies? What does that have to do with health? In a recent article by Jaime L. Kurtz PhD in Psychology Today magazine, the role of hobbies in our lives was brought into focus. She states that hobbies help us in several ways. "Hobbies help you structure your time," they "promote flow" keeping you "immersed in the activity at hand." According to her article "Hobbies can foster new social connections" and "make you interesting." The biggest point is that "Hobbies help you cope with

stress" as you apply yourself to something besides just your job or profession.

I love working with my hands, doing woodwork. I play the trombone and write novels and these things don't take away from my career as a physician. They enhance my life experience and make me a more interesting person.

What do you enjoy? Can you apply it as a way to get involved in something new? If you don't have a hob-

by, consider starting one and find more enjoyment in that time when you're not working.



My Website



[www.scottmcpersonmd.com](http://www.scottmcpersonmd.com)