One in five people in the United States suffers from respiratory allergies. One in twelve adults and one in ten children have asthma. It is very common for people to have both allergies and asthma. These health issues cause irritating and potentially serious effects on well-being. It is important to know how to minimize and control their symptoms.

**Allergies—Causes and Symptoms**

Respiratory allergies are caused by your body’s response to the presence of an allergen, such as pollen. Your body recognizes something in the air—that is typically harmless—and interprets it as a serious threat; it starts a process to attack this treat, resulting in many symptoms.

After the first exposure to an allergen, your body will study it and flag it as an intruder. To prepare for the next exposure, your body will develop special cells, called antibodies, which will detect the allergen when it appears. On future exposures, your immune system goes into action. The antibodies recognize the intruder and activate many different cells, such as mast cells. Mast cells release histamine and produce allergy symptoms in the nose, lungs, and skin.

Typically, these symptoms occur with respiratory allergies:
- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Watery eyes
- Coughing
- Itchy eyes and nose
- Dark circles under the eyes

How much of the allergen enters your body often determines how severe the symptoms are.

**Asthma—Causes and Symptoms**

Asthma is a chronic, recurring inflammation of the airways. It may be caused by many different things, called triggers; triggers and symptoms can be different for each person. When someone is exposed to a trigger, the airways become inflamed, narrow, and filled with mucus. This makes it difficult for the person to breath.

Common triggers include:
- Mold
- Dust mites
- Animal danders (skin, fur, feathers, saliva)
- Pollen
- Smoke, both environmental and cigarette
- Exercise

Typically, these symptoms occur with asthma:
- Shortness of breath
- Tightness, pain, or pressure in the chest
- Coughing, especially at night
- Wheezing (due to lack of air)

It is crucial to keep these symptoms under control. If they cannot be controlled, the consequences can be severe—even including death.

**Prevention and Treatment**

The treatment of allergies and asthma is very patient-specific. It is important to recognize what triggers your allergy and/or asthma in order to prevent the symptoms from occurring. It is also necessary to clean your home and office regularly as pollens and other irritants from outside may enter the inside environment.

It is essential to be in frequent contact with your doctor, especially if you suffer a lot from the symptoms mentioned above. People with asthma should have an “action plan”—what to do when they cannot breath and when to get help.