Self-medication can make allergic symptoms worse, says IMA

Incidence of allergic disorders is on the rise in the country due to various factors

New Delhi, 19 July 2017: Statistics indicate that about 20% to 30% of the Indian population is afflicted with allergic rhinitis. Allergic disorders have increased markedly in the country in the past two decades. As per the IMA, almost one in two people exhibit an allergic response to some common environmental factor.

Allergic rhinitis is a chronic inflammatory respiratory disease affecting one-third of the worldwide population. Low acceptance level for the disease exacerbates the condition. What is more alarming is that many people indulge in self-medication by using over-the-counter drugs, which do not provide any relief most of the time.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, “Allergic rhinitis is associated with a group of symptoms that affect the nose. These symptoms show up when a person breathes in some allergen such as dust, animal dander, or pollen. Symptoms can also arise when a person consumes certain food items that he/she is allergic to. The body releases histamines upon contact with an allergen. This is a natural chemical that defends the body from the allergen. When histamines are released, it manifests as symptoms of allergic rhinitis including a runny nose, sneezing, and itchy eyes. Although anyone can be affected by allergies, those with a history of allergies in the family are at greater risk. People with asthma or atopic eczema also stand a greater chance of getting allergies.”

Some of the most common symptoms of allergic rhinitis include sneezing, runny nose, coughing, a sore throat, itchy and watery eyes, frequent headaches, extremely dry and itchy skin, hives, and excessive fatigue. Certain external factors can make these symptoms worse and include smoke, chemicals, pollution, and fumes.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “Allergic rhinitis can be seasonal (during certain seasons such as spring) or perennial (round the year). Seasonal allergic rhinitis is more common in children and adolescents. The symptoms begin to show before the age of 20, stay constant through early
adulthood, but begin improving during middle age and beyond. The best way to avoid an allergic reaction is to not expose the body to any possible triggers.”

Certain drugs such as antihistamines, decongestants, and nasal corticosteroid sprays can help in controlling the symptoms of allergic rhinitis. However, these should only be taken in consultation with a doctor. There are also certain alternative therapies which can be used to manage symptoms. Additionally, following these tips can help in the prevention of allergic rhinitis, more so in those who are susceptible to allergies.

- Stay indoors when pollen counts high
- Avoid exercising outdoors particularly early in the morning.
- Take a shower immediately after being outside.
- Keep windows and doors shut as much as possible during the allergy season.
- Keep your mouth and nose covered when you go out.
- Bathe your dog at least twice a week.
- Avoid carpeting the house to reduce dust mites.

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About IMA:  Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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