

Are your child's cold symptoms really allergies?

New option in allergy treatment could help you beat allergies for good.

I see it every fall and winter — families who struggle with lingering “colds” or sinus problems, with symptoms that include itchy or watery eyes, sniffles, coughs, runny or stuffy noses, and plugged ears.

What many people don't know is that indoor allergies are common in the <CITY> area — dust mites, mold, and other allergens cause many of the same symptoms as colds or sinusitis. When the weather cools and we close our homes, indoor allergens can make us as miserable as seasonal pollens.

Common indoor allergens

Dust mites are a common cause of indoor allergies. These creatures are too small for the eye to see, but find their way into carpet, bedding, and upholstered furniture. Dust mites live off skin cells shed by humans, hair, pet dander, and other organic materials common in our homes.

The waste produced by mites, not the mite itself, causes the allergic reaction. Keeping your home dusted and vacuumed helps battle mite allergies, but temperature and humidity are just as important. Mites thrive in warm, moist environments and won't survive when humidity levels fall below 30-50%. Because mites and mold can be hard to eliminate in our climate, treating allergies along with environmental changes is the best route to getting help.

Treatment options

For young kids, finding relief is important. Allergy symptoms make it hard for children to concentrate on school, difficult to sleep, or simply make them cranky. Treating symptoms with antihistamines is one option, but it's only a temporary fix. Treating the cause of allergies through immunotherapy is the only known way to change allergic disease. It works by slowly building your body's tolerance to what causes reactions by delivering small amounts of the substance(s) that causes reactions. Allergy shots are one effective method of immunotherapy. Unfortunately, this isn't an option for children under six — which is a critical time for treating allergy.

There's another treatment option for allergic children and their families — sublingual immunotherapy, or allergy drops, which work similar to allergy shots. Instead of receiving shots, patients place liquid drops under the tongue. The drops affect specialized cells that teach your body to tolerate what causes the allergic reaction.

Research shows allergy drops are a safe, effective and convenient option for those who can't commit to or tolerate shots — including infants and young children. Along with pollens and indoor allergens like dust mites and mold, research shows that allergy drops have been effective in treating some food allergies.

Taking the first step

The first step to tackling what might be an allergic problem is accurate testing. Allergy tests help your doctor find which allergens are problems, and treatment can be personalized based on those results. Research has shown that treating allergic children early on in life, including those with ear infections and eczema as a result of allergy, can help prevent the development of other related conditions including asthma.

Immunotherapy can take 3-5 years to complete, but the results can give your child or family member life-long benefits.