

Battle Annoying Allergies Now by Doralisa Palomares

Davis is a nice place to be in the springtime. You can lie out on the Quad to study or soak up some sun, escape to the seclusion of Putah Creek, wander through the Arboretum, watch the bluebirds hop along the fresh patches of grass, or even play a couple games of tennis.

If you're one of the many who suffer from allergies, however, itchy, watery eyes and a runny nose may slow you down.

"Allergies are an unusual reaction to a protein substance such as pollen, animal dander or house dust," said Dr. Walton Brainerd, attending physician at the UCD Student Health Center.

The protein substances cause a release of histamines (organic ammonia compounds released by the body tissues), and a variety of symptoms may occur. The most common symptoms include sneezing, itching in the nose and throat, or nasal discharge; hives and wheezing may also result.

In most cases, there is a history of asthma, hay fever, or eczema in the allergy-sufferer's family.

Brainerd stated that allergies can be acquired at any time during a person's life, however, since some people may become sensitized to an irritant over a period of time.

Fortunately, allergy symptoms do not always mean an allergy. Reactive airways may cause irritants to bring on the symptoms of an allergy. Brainerd said pollen is the most common irritant during most of the year because of the long growing season.

So, how do you survive the sneezes and the sniffles this spring? You can arm yourself with Sudafed, Dimetapp, Actifed, or an antihistamine with a decongestant (to counteract the drowsiness) and pack your backpack with a box of Kleenex. Some other suggestions from Brainerd:

INDOORS — Try to minimize house dust and overstuffed furniture. Use polyester or hypoallergenic pillows and mattresses with casings. Instead of a cat or dog, invest in a goldfish, lizard, or snake. Keep the windows closed.

OUTDOORS — Wear a scarf or mask if you must go outside. Antihistamines may help.

Think you have an allergy, but you're not sure? Skin tests can be done to find out what your skin is hypersensitive to, but Brainerd said he reserves this procedure for the most severe allergies.