

Are Hidden Allergies Causing Many of Your Health Problems?

Posted By [Dr. Mercola](#) | November 01 2008 | 14,943 views

In this video, Dr. Doris J. Rapp, MD, board-certified as both an environmental medical specialist and pediatric allergist, talks about getting to the root of what might be causing your illness.

Dr. Rapp is also a homeopath and the author of the bestselling books [Is This Your Child?](#) and [Is This Your Child's World?](#). She has published 29 medical articles, eight chapters in medical texts, and 11 other books about allergy.

Dr. Rapp has also produced a number of educational videotapes that vividly demonstrate the dramatic physical and behavioral changes in children and adults that can be achieved using her method of allergy testing called Provocation/Neutralization.

To hear the entire expert interview, please [join the Mercola Inner Circle](#).

Dr. Mercola's Comments:

If you are experiencing an unexplained illness, there's a good chance that allergies -- to food, chemicals, mold, pollution and more -- may be to blame. Dr. Rapp has been a mentor of mine for 15 years, and she is truly an expert in this field. She does an excellent job of explaining how the things you are exposed to everyday could be making you sick.

"There are epidemics of illnesses like cancer, autism, attention deficit disorder (ADD), muscular conditions and infertility, and many people are unaware that these epidemics can be due to chemical exposures," Dr. Rapp says.

As she explains on her site, www.DrRapp.com -- which is an excellent resource for anyone interested in avoiding environmental toxins:

"Most people recognize itchy eyes, runny noses and hives or itchy skin as allergies. These are the typically accepted forms of allergy. However, there is another form that is not easily recognized, suspected or even agreed upon.

It can affect any part of your body from an inability to concentrate and think clearly to fatigue, hyperactivity, an inability to sleep, joint and muscle pains, bedwetting, ear infections (check your dairy intake!), and asthma (try no milk, decrease dust mites and feathers).

Any food can cause allergies, even healthy foods like apples and pears. Some of the biggest culprits are cow's milk or any dairy, sugar, wheat, eggs, preservatives and artificial colorings.

Some common environmental allergens are dust, molds, pollen, cigarette smoke, pesticides, natural gas, gasoline, perfumes, scented cleaning materials or markers, deodorants, disinfectants, synthetic carpets, the chemicals in new mattresses, Aspartame and non-stick cookware."

In short, you could be allergic to just about anything, and it could be causing a [dizzying array of symptoms](#). Fortunately, narrowing down the problem is a lot easier than it may seem.

Uncovering the Source of Your Problems

If you are often fatigued, irritable, achy or depressed, it may be due to something

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Sometimes the connection is obvious, for instance you get a pounding headache after being exposed to perfume in a department store. But often the connection is more subtle.

Dr. Rapp explains that if you're exposed to an allergic chemical, the negative reaction will take just a few seconds to surface. But if you're allergic to a food, dust, mold or pollen, it could take 15 minutes to an hour before you get sick. There can also be delayed reactions to foods that occur 8 to 24 hours or more after consumption, as in colitis, mouth ulcers and bed-wetting.

By that time you probably won't have any idea what to attribute the symptoms to.

So, in order to narrow down what's causing the problem, you need to do some detective work. For food this involves eating an allergen-free diet, then slowly introducing foods back in and noting how they make you feel.

You can also keep a food diary. In the diary, list your actual dietary habits including time of ingestion, time any symptom is observed, cravings and improvement in symptoms. Make the recordings throughout the day, rather than waiting until the end of the day when it is easier to leave things out, and be sure to record everything you consume -- even vitamins, beverages, chewing gum, etc.

After two weeks you can look for any recurring pattern among frequently eaten foods and symptoms. This can be difficult if you eat a lot of processed foods, as these often contain "hidden" ingredients like corn, milk, soy, wheat, yeast and artificial additives that are often problematic. The most suspect foods will be those eaten daily or more than once a week, and, ironically, foods that are your favorites, that you crave or that you eat during the night.

"Your favorite foods are usually the ones that cause trouble. And when you add them back the second week, on an empty stomach, one at a time, one per day, you will see within an hour what happens when you eat that food.

And for the first time, you're going to see a direct cause and effect relationship because you've stopped eating the food for several days and then you added them back one at a time," Dr. Rapp says.

To track down a chemical sensitivity, you need to keep track of your potential chemical exposures and subsequent symptoms. Chemicals can stay in your body for a lifetime, so past exposures could be responsible for your current symptoms. This is why with chemical exposures it's important to include past exposure as well.

Getting Rid of Environmental Allergies

Addressing allergies takes a multi-faceted approach that involves [optimizing your diet](#) and avoiding potential triggers. However, for relief of your symptoms provocation neutralization (PN), which is taught by the American Academy of Environmental Medicine, can be very effective.

Provocation refers to "provoking a change" and neutralization refers to "neutralizing the reaction caused by provocation." The success rate for this approach is in the 80 percent to 90 percent range, and patients can receive their treatment at home.

During provocation-neutralization, a small amount of allergen is injected under your skin to produce a small bump called a "wheal" and then monitored for a reaction. If you have a positive reaction, such as fatigue, headache or a growth in the wheal, then the allergen is neutralized with diluted injections, or drops that go in your mouth, of the same allergen.

PN is a long-term solution that will, in most cases, provide a permanent treatment. There are also virtually no side effects with the treatment, unlike with conventional drugs.

15 Tips to Avoid Environmental Toxins -- and Their Related Allergies

There are two basic steps that everyone should take to protect themselves from environmental toxins:

- Take measures to stop polluting your body (at home, school and work)
- Get the stored toxins or chemicals out of your body

Dr. Rapp has listed some basic steps you can take to [stop polluting your body right now](#):

1. Get an air purifier for your home
2. Get a water purifier for both your kitchen faucet (drinking water) and shower
3. Don't microwave your food or baby bottles
4. Avoid food in plastic containers or wrappings
5. Don't use high heat under non-stick cookware (and even better, avoid us

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6. Eat organic foods and avoid GM and irradiated foods as much as possible
7. Buy natural fabrics
8. Use a non-synthetic mattress with 100 percent cotton sheets
9. Use natural personal care products (pure soaps, non-fluoride toothpaste, natural sanitary products) and cosmetics (lipsticks, foundations, etc.)
10. For infants, use cotton diapers (if you must use disposable diapers, Tushies brand is better than the others)
11. Use only natural cleaning products
12. Use natural pesticide control
13. Run (don't walk) away from chemical exposures (exposure to even a tiny amount of toxin for seconds can affect your body or an unborn infants)
14. Read labels on products to be sure the ingredients are natural
15. If you're considering vaccinations, look into the pros and cons before making a decision

To begin ridding your body of toxins, Dr. Rapp gives these valuable suggestions:

- Drink more pure water. You'll urinate more and be able to eliminate more toxins, and it will help to soften your bowel movements so this waste is also eliminated more easily
- Use a wet or dry sauna to perspire (again removing more toxins)
- Make sure your house is environmentally safe. Use only natural disinfectants, deodorizers, furniture etc.
- Build up your immune system with nutrients, minerals and essential fatty acids
- A very few might have to consider removal of the metal fillings in their teeth (which should be done only by a highly qualified biological dentist)

I would urge anyone who is suffering from an unexplained illness, considering starting a family or experiencing fertility problems to read Dr. Rapp's intriguing book *[Our Toxic World: A Wake Up Call](#)*. In fact, I would encourage everyone, especially those interested in living a quality life at a higher level of health, to take the time to review this book.

It contains many insights that can protect you and your family from the toxins that are so common in our environment.

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