

Prescription medications like topical intranasal steroids are more effective in the prevention and treatment of summer grass allergy symptoms. These are safe, non-addicting medications that need to be used on a more consistent basis to prevent allergy symptoms. They do not work quickly like the quick-acting antihistamines. Lastly, for those patients that are difficult to treat with medications, allergy immunotherapy or "allergy shots" are the most effective way to reduce and sometimes cure one of their allergy to grass pollen. For most people, the shots may reduce or eliminate the need for any medications.

John Van Wagoner, MD
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I was diagnosed with melanoma last fall. What is the best way to protect myself when I am outside?

Grace T., The Colony, TX

More than one million Americans are newly diagnosed every year with skin cancer, and nearly every affected person has a strong histo-

ry of over exposure to sunlight or tanning. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends that "sunscreens should be used every day if you are going to be in the sun for more than 20 minutes". They should be applied separately under makeup. Apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater at least 30 minutes before sun exposure. When applying sunscreen, pay particular attention to the face, ears, hands and arms, and coat the skin liberally. One ounce, enough to fill a shot glass, is considered the amount needed to cover each exposed area of the body properly. Ideally, sunscreens should be water-resistant, so they cannot be easily removed by sweating or swimming. Ingredients which provide broad-spectrum protection include benzophenones (oxybenzone), cinnamates (octylmethyl cinnamate and cinoxate), titanium dioxide, zinc oxide, avobenzone (Parsol 1789) and ecamsule (Mexoryl SX).

Even though sunscreens are helpful, remember that the best way to protect your skin is to stay out of the sun! It is best to avoid direct sun exposure during the peak UV radiation hours (between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm). If you are outside, cover up! Wear tightly woven clothing, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses. Enjoy the summer - but be safe.

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My eyes get very sore at the end of the day, and I was told that it is eye strain. I work on the computer a lot. What can I do that will help?

Anonymous, Plano, TX

You are suffering from a condition known as asthenopia which is a condition that manifests itself through nonspecific symptoms such as fatigue, red eyes, eye strain, blurred vision, headache and occasional double vision. Symptoms often occur after reading, computer work, or other activities that involve tedious visual tasks. Depending on your age, eyeglasses may help. A comprehensive eye examination will determine the best solution, which can be as

simple as ordinary reading glasses or as complex as progressive reading glasses that incorporate variable powers for near tasks in one pair of glasses.

Proper positioning at the computer is also critical, so I recommend positioning your monitor 18-30 inches from your face, with the top of the computer screen at or slightly below your eye level. Also, make sure you eliminate all sources of glare by using blinds or drapes on nearby windows and dim the overhead lights. If your office does not allow these modifications, try a glare filter over your computer screen.

However, we all can benefit from the following steps: First, make sure you have adequate lighting but try to avoid fluorescent lighting. Second, make sure you blink your eyes frequently to keep them lubricated or try some artificial tears. Third, take breaks. We recommend the 20/20 rule. Every 20 minutes, look away from your computer for 20 seconds.

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Dr. Fiona Wright is the founder of the Aesthetic Institute of Plano. She has lived and practiced in Collin County for 12 years and has earned a reputation as one of the premier physicians in the area of cosmetic dermatology in the Dallas - Fort Worth area. She has been featured in several NBC News Health Reports and is well known for her honest opinions and expertise.