

Top Reasons Allergies and Health Issues Have Increased

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This document is a summary of the top reasons that both allergies and health issues have been increasing in staggering proportions over the last few decades. As long as credit is given as listed above, the contents of this document may be freely shared on websites, blogs, and in publications. Credit constitutes the copyright symbol along with the author's name, title and website address.

1. Changes in Diet

Without question research shows that the American diet has changed dramatically over the last 100 years and not for the better. We now consume more additives, food dyes, preservatives, hormones, antibiotics (from food) and sugar than ever in the history of our country or even humanity. On average, Americans are eating more foods that are empty of nutrition and fiber and higher in fat, sugar and additives. Additives, preservatives and food dyes have been proven to be harmful to human health. Visit www.Feingold.org for medical studies on how food additives can impact health, behavior, learning and cognitive abilities and emotional well being. Our increased consumption of sugar has been associated with cancer as well as other health issues. All of this equals less nutrition for our population. The human body runs and operates on nutrition. The changes in the American diet over the last 100 years alone are enough to contribute substantially to a decline in health and an increase in allergies.

2. Changes in Lifestyle

While there are many, many changes in lifestyle in the past 100 years, two primary changes that can contribute to health and well being are physical exercise and a sense of community or relatedness. One hundred years ago, people did not have to go out and exercise. Physical exertion was part of the lifestyle in 1909. Even though the first car was produced in 1908, it would be many years before bridges, roads and the accompanying infrastructure were complete to allow for cars to be the norm. Life back then involved walking, manual labor, lifting, and much more physical work. It is medically proven that exercise is good for human health and wellbeing.

A second significant change in lifestyle involves a decrease in the sense of relatedness or community that American's experience overall. It is now quite common for children to move away from their parents and live in a different town, state or part of the country. Many people living in the U.S. today do not know who their neighbors are, or much about them. This was not the case in the past. Studies have shown that human beings have a deep need to feel connected to others. American's today report feeling alone, isolation and a lack of community or sense of belonging, which is a stark contrast from one hundred years ago when

families belonged to tight knit communities and had extended families to help when problems came along.

3. Changes in the Environment

The environment that Americans live in today has changed radically in the last forty years let alone the last 100 years. Today a newborn baby's umbilical cord blood has a very good chance of being contaminated with over 287 man-made chemicals. This is the subject of an excellent video by Ken Cook, one of the co-founders of the Environmental Working Group (www.EWG.org). Toxic chemicals can be found in perfumes, colognes, after-shave, personal care products, laundry soaps, dryer sheets, and in cleaning supplies. Furniture that is sold to consumers is routinely sprayed at the factory with pesticides and sometimes rodenticides to prevent the furniture from being eaten by insects and rodents while it is in storage. Anti-stain chemicals are often added to prevent stains, which further contributes to the toxic exposure for anyone sitting on the furniture.

Lawn chemicals have proven to contribute to cancer, leukemia, birth defects and other health issues. The increased use of lawn chemicals to kill weeds and rodents is staggering. Pesticides are now widely used in schools where young children spend much of their day. Infants, children and the elderly are among the most vulnerable to the negative consequences of pesticide and chemicals. Many consumer non-profit organizations such as Beyond Pesticides are working to make a difference in this area.

Consumers do not understand that the U.S. government is not regulating the toxic chemicals that consumers are exposed to on a daily basis. Personal care products are permitted in the U.S. to contain such toxic and cancer causing ingredients as acetone, benzaldehyde, benzyl acetate, ethanol ethyl acetate, linalool, methylene chloride, and a-terpineol and toluene. To receive an excellent brochure on this topic, send a \$1.00 donation and self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Environmental Health Coalition of Western Massachusetts, PO BOX 187, Northampton, MA 01061-0187. Make checks payable to: EHCWM.

4. Increased Stress

Increases in stress levels add to the nutritional levels that the human body requires to be healthy. There are many societal indicators that support that Americans, overall, are more stressed than their ancestors and in some cases more stressed than their socio-economic peers from other countries. Increased stress can lead to many health complications of the mind and body.

5. Decreased Sleep or quality of sleep

Sleep is very important to human health. Extreme sleep deprivation can adversely affect brain function and cause a variety of health issues. Sleep is the only time that the body can fully work on healing itself. No matter whose statistics you read or believe, this is a significant problem in the U.S. Americans, overall, are sleeping less and experiencing a decline in the quality of their sleep.

6. Changes in Water quality and content

The subject of contamination in the U.S. has been in many newspapers and magazines over the last few years. Testing companies are finding pharmaceutical drugs, chemicals, cleaning agents and other substances in our water supply. Bottled water, most often sold in plastic bottles, has substantial quality issues as well as those presented by phthalates. Phthalates are hormone-disrupting chemicals that can cause a variety of health issues. The Environmental Working Group (www.EWG.org) has a free downloadable report on the topic of bottled water. It does not take a rocket scientist to understand that drinking water that contains pharmaceutical drugs, chemicals, cleaning agents and other toxic substances would cause health problems.

7. Lack of variation in diet

Many Americans eat the same foods over and over again whether it is eating chicken every night or four times a week, or eating bagels every morning. A lack in variation in diet can contribute to the development of food allergies and to the development of nutritional deficiencies. A food allergy can develop simply from eating a large volume of a food over time or from eating a smaller quantity of that same food every day for a long time. While some people have little or no propensity to develop food allergies, other individuals are more inclined to develop food allergies. In either case, lack of variation in diet can contribute to health issues and allergies.

8. Less Common Sense/More reliance on medicine

One hundred years ago, there were at least three conditions that prevented people with aches and pains from racing off to the doctor. The first issue was transportation, which we have already lightly touched on in item #2 above. The second issue was that physicians were not in abundant supply. The third issue was that it was not culturally acceptable to just run to the doctor when you had an issue. People used common sense to solve their own health problems. If they had an ache or a pain, they rested and took care of themselves. If they had gas, acid reflux, or a gastrointestinal symptom, they looked at what they had eaten. Today we have a very different cultural norm where taking a pill for everything and anything is accepted practice.