



June 2012 Edition

Allergies May Be Linked to Higher Cancer Risk

Can allergies increase your risk of cancer? A new study out of University of Washington Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center suggests this may be the case.

The study found that patients with allergies may have a higher risk of developing blood cancers than those who don't suffer from allergies. The study included more than 64,000 patients who were asked about allergy and asthma symptoms. The patients were then evaluated seven years later to see if they had been diagnosed with a blood cancer.

Those who had allergies — specifically allergies to plants, grass, and trees — had a slightly increased incidence of blood cancers. Patients with asthma did not have an increased risk of blood cancer.

“As studies like this demonstrate, there may be an increased incidence of certain cancers if you have these types of conditions,” said Dr. Edward Kim, associate professor in the department of thoracic/head and neck medical oncology at MD Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas.

While allergies don't cause blood cancer, the researchers

propose that perhaps the same inflammation that causes allergy symptoms may lead to an overactive immune system — and that this overactivity, in turn, can lead to blood cancers.

Those who suffer from allergies, however, probably need not be alarmed. The added risk is so small that no new screening guidelines are currently planned. Moreover, the lead author of the study, Dr. Mazyar Shadman of Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center at University of Washington, stated there is, “no need for any type of change” at this point. Rather, Shadman said he hopes that the results of these studies will help researchers uncover the mechanism of blood cancers by studying patients with allergies. But, he added, he doesn't think there is “any indication for change in terms of treatment and medical follow up” at this point.

So what does this mean for patients with allergies? “It means one can be more vigilant in seeing their doctor and going to their yearly physicals,” Kim said. Treating your allergies may be more important than ever.



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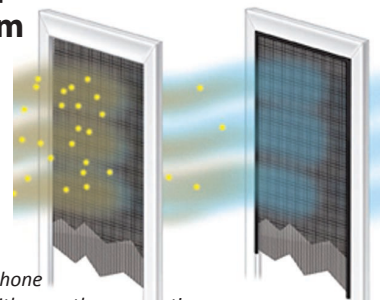


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