



AFTER A month of sniffing and sneezing, software engineer Sneha Sharma was tired of her cold. She was also tired of the advice from colleagues and family to, among other things, drink warm water, inhale steam every night, eat hot chicken soup and take all kinds of medicines. As Sharma knew very well, none of these remedies gave her lasting relief.

Finally, in desperation, Sharma decided to see an ENT specialist. After an examination, the doctor told Sneha that she did not have an ordinary cold, but had developed an allergic cold that needed proper antihistamines (anti-allergic medicine) to treat it.

ALLERGIES V/S COLDS

"A cold happens due to some kind of a virus infection that usually lasts a week," explains Dr Aru Handa, senior ENT consultant at Moolchand Medcity. "Colds spread either by touch or through the air. But if a cold persists, it may be due to some allergy. In most cases, allergies are caused by pollen in the air or even a variation in temperature."

Initially, it may not be easy to differentiate between a cold and an allergy, as most symptoms – nasal congestion, a runny nose and sneezing – are similar. However, "In the case of an allergy, itching – especially of the eyes, nose, and sometimes ears and throat, is common. This is usually not present with a cold. Body aches, fever and sore throat occur with a cold; these are absent with allergies," explains Dr Arun Thareja, ENT specialist at Maharaja Agarsen Hospital.

In fact, says Dr Thareja, along with anti-allergic medicines, it is essential to use intranasal sprays to keep the nostrils clear. "These need to be taken for three to four weeks, especially if the weather is changing," adds Dr Thareja.

Another thing to keep in mind is to avoid triggers – pollen present in the air or a pet at home or even

dust, moulds and spores present in the environment. "The best thing to do is figure out the exact cause of the allergy and avoid it as much as possible," suggests Dr Handa.

SINUSITIS

"Allergy patients are more likely to have sinus infections," explains Dr Ajay Lal, head, department of pulmonology Max Healthcare. People with allergies usually complain of watery, itchy eyes and itchy skin while those suffering from sinusitis sometimes complain of toothache or pain between the eyes.

TREATMENT

Once a diagnosis has been made, some people can get by with rest, plenty of fluids and over-the-counter medications. "A person diagnosed with acute sinusitis might require an antibiotic to eliminate the infection and a decongestant to reduce congestion," says Dr Lal. "Chronic sinusitis may require stronger oral antibiotics or intranasal nubilised treatments. People with recurring sinusitis may need a CT scan."

Dr Pradeep Dua, research officer in ayurveda at the Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha, department of AYUSH, says, "Taking turmeric with milk is a good option." *Brunch* columnist Dr Shikha Sharma adds, "Ginger root has anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving properties. Amla is high in vitamin C and helps the respiratory system fight infections.

"Breathe coconut oil deeply into each nostril a couple of times a day. Drink tulsi leaf tea three or four times a day, and a quarter of a cup of hot water with half a teaspoon of haldi after meals," adds Sharma.

And remember, the changing season is one of the main reasons why you may get an allergic cold at this time of the year, just as you may suffer from other problems like dry skin/lips (see box). So take a little extra care even as you wait eagerly for winter to come.

veenus@hindustantimes.com



This season...

- Avoid people suffering from cough and colds
- For chapped lips, use petroleum jelly
- Get oil massages for your hair regularly, and don't forget to use conditioner
- Add a little oil to your bath water to keep your skin moisturised
- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables and drink water