

106 Allergic to the Cold

To air week of February 11, 2008

Intro: February is a time of year when people tend to complain about the cold. Sure, cold weather can be a nuisance, but did you know that some people are actually allergic to it? It's true. You can be allergic to the cold. More from Mayo Clinic.

Video

Total running time

Melissa Kerlin
Allergic to the cold

James Li, M.D., Ph.D.
Mayo Clinic Asthma and Allergy

Melissa Kerlin
Allergic to the cold

Melissa Kerlin

Audio

THE COLD OF WINTER. SOME PEOPLE HATE IT. OTHERS EMBRACE IT. AND SOME, LIKE MELISSA KERLIN, ARE ALLERGIC TO IT. IT'S CALLED COLD URTICARIA.

"THEY'D BE LIKE, YOU'RE ALLERGIC TO WHAT?"

"IT IS POSSIBLE FOR PEOPLE TO DEVELOP AN ALLERGY TO THE COLD."

"MY EARS WOULD GET NUMB UNTIL THEY WERE BURNING,," AND SHE'D GET HIVES. SO WHENEVER MELISSA HEADS OUT IN TEMPERATURES BELOW 45-DEGREES SHE BUNDLES UP.

"HEAVY COAT, MITTENS..."

Melissa Kerlin
Allergic to cold

IT'S NOT JUST COLD WEATHER
THAT CAUSES PROBLEMS.
MELISSA CAN'T EAT ICE CREAM OR
DRINK COLD LIQUIDS.

“MY THROAT WOULD JUST CLOSE
UP, SWELL UP.”

OR SWIM IN COOL WATER.

James Li, M.D., Ph.D.
Mayo Clinic Asthma and Allergy

“WITH EXTREME COLD EXPOSURE
OR TOTAL BODY EXPOSURE
THERE CAN BE A MASSIVE
RELEASE OF HISTAMINE AND
SIGNIFICANT BODY SWELLING,
EVEN A DROP IN BLOOD
PRESSURE AND THIS COULD BE A
LIFE-THREATENING SITUATION.”

DR. JAMES LI SAYS IN SOME
PEOPLE, THE COLD, LIKE MANY
ALLERGENS, TRIGGERS MAST
CELLS IN YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM
TO RELEASE HISTAMINE AND
OTHER CHEMICALS. THIS CAUSES
AFFECTED SKIN TISSUE TO
BECOME INFLAMED, RED, ITCHY

To Melissa outside with auto-injector

STANDUP

VIVIEN WILLIAMS

REPORTING

AND SWOLLEN. AND IF THIS REACTION HAPPENS IN AN AREA SUCH AS YOUR THROAT, YOU COULD BE IN TROUBLE. MELISSA TAKES ANTIHISTAMINES EVERY DAY AND CARRIES AN EPINEPHRINE AUTO-INJECTOR. SO HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU'RE ALLERGIC TO THE COLD? TAKE THE ICE CUBE TEST. THE ICE CUBE TEST INVOLVES PUTTING AN ICE PACK ON YOUR FORE ARM TO SEE IF THERE'S A REACTION. IF I WERE ALLERGIC TO COLD, THIS PATCH WOULD BE RED AND RAISED. MELISSA'S WAS. AND NOW SHE ENJOYS THE WINTER WEATHER FROM THE INSIDE LOOKING OUT. FOR MEDICAL EDGE, I'M VIVIEN WILLIAMS.

Anchor tag:

Melissa also has to be careful about air-conditioning, which could cause her skin temperature to drop.

Dr. Li says there's no way to tell who will become allergic to the cold. It's rare, but if you suspect you might be, talk to an allergist to see if you should restrict any cold-related activities.

For more information visit our Website at... [STATIONS: Per the licensing agreement, please provide a link from your station's website to <http://www.mayoclinic.org> or voice tag "mayoclinic.org" for more information.]