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May is National Asthma & Allergy Awareness Month

(Breese, Highland, Greenville IL) – May, when plants and trees release pollen into the air, is the peak season for asthma and allergies. Each year, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America declares May to be National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 26 million Americans have asthma, which accounts for nearly 1.7 million emergency room visits each year, and is the most common pediatric chronic illness.

Dr. Barry Zeffren, asthma and allergy specialist, says, "Asthma is a disorder that causes the airways of the lungs to swell and narrow, leading to wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness and coughing. An allergy is a hypersensitivity disorder of the immune system. Allergic reactions occur when a person's immune system reacts to normally harmless substances in the environment. Allergies are significant triggers for asthma symptoms – 60% to 80% of children and 65% to 75% of adults with asthma also have allergies," he shared.

The best treatment is to take your condition seriously by learning all you can from your physician and through research. Some tips to help prevent attacks are:

- Identify and eliminate the triggers in your environment that can cause an allergy or asthma attack.
- Use the correct methods to clean and sanitize your home.
- Use preventative and treatment medications.

"It is crucial to be aware of the triggers that can cause allergy and asthma attacks because once you recognize these triggers, you can work on eliminating them from your environment," explains Zeffren. The following list profiles the most common allergy and asthma triggers:

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- Pollen: During allergy season, pollen is the number one culprit for making you sneeze, causing your nose to run, or giving you itchy eyes.
- Dust Mites: These microorganisms' waste products are highly irritating to the lungs, and because the waste is so fine, it is easily breathed in.
- Mildew and Mold: Keeping your home humidity at a balanced level, between 40% and 50%, will keep mold and mildew from growing and keep those tiny mold spores and bacteria from infecting your air.
- Pet Dander: People and pets are often inseparable, and if this is the case in your home, you will need to do a bit more maintenance to ensure that the presence of your pets isn't adversely affecting your asthma or allergies.
- Smoke: Smoke is particularly bad for asthma and allergy-sufferers. If tobacco-smoking cannot be avoided completely, it should only be done outside or limited to a single room in the house that can be ventilated from the outside of the house, not through the house.
- Cleaning Products: Cleaning products contain harsh chemicals that saturate the air. These chemicals are dangerous for everyone, but they are particularly dangerous for asthmatics and should be avoided or used minimally.
- Fragrances: Whether it is scented candles, perfumes, lotions, or air fresheners, the chemicals in these products are very dangerous for asthma sufferers.

To find an asthma and allergy specialist in Breese, Greenville or Highland, call (618) 526-8585, (618) 690-3411, or (618) 651-2750, respectively.

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