

# Training Tip #17

## Asthma and Allergies

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### **Allergic Rhinitis:**

An immunologic response that occurs after environmental exposure to an allergen. Most common symptoms include runny nose with clear discharge, postnasal drip, sneezing, itching of the nose and palate and coughing. Nasal congestion may occur as well as headache and fatigue. Training walks and the event course expose walkers to varied types of grass, trees, pollen and dust which can cause an allergic response. Sleeping in tents on grass fields may also stimulate allergies.

If you have experienced seasonal or situational allergic rhinitis, be sure to bring your allergy medications. Antihistamines (oral or topical, such as Benadryl or Actifed) are most commonly used. Second generation antihistamines such as Claritin or loratidine are less sedating. Nasal corticosteroids are effective but usually take 3 days to begin to work. The best treatment is to anticipate exposures and pre-treat before symptoms begin.

### **Exercise Induced Asthma:**

Bronchospasm presenting with wheezing, coughing and/or chest tightness occurring during or after exercise is called exercise induced asthma. It can be seen in 40% of those with allergic rhinitis. Rapid breathing and mouth breathing decreases the body's ability to warm and humidify air in the nose, throat and lungs.

In some people this can cause constriction and inflammation of the lung passages. Beta agonist inhalers such as Albuterol or Proventil can decrease these spasms. 2 puffs, 15 minutes before exercise, should help you for 3 to 4 hours. However, for longer exercise periods such as the Susan G. Komen 3-Day® or a long training walk, which could be 8 hours, a longer acting medication such as Salmeterol or inhaled corticosteroid should be used.

If you are experiencing asthma symptoms during or after exercise, consult your doctor for evaluation. If you normally use an Albuterol inhaler with exercise, be sure to carry it with you on your training walks or discuss changing your medication to the longer acting Salmeterol. Do not put your rescue inhaler in your luggage.

### **Allergic Reactions:**

If you have allergic reactions to bee stings, mosquitoes, insects or foods, rapid treatment with antihistamines or epinephrine is best. Be sure to carry your own epinephrine pen on your training walks and the event.