



Summer Sniffles

Karen Binkley, MD, FRCPC

- ✓ Angela, a 32-year-old financial planner, has presented with rhinoconjunctivitis each August for the past two years.
- ✓ This year, she has some chest tightness that worsens with exertion and a slight cough.
- ✓ She has no history of asthma or drug allergies and tests to date have been negative.
- ✓ She has had adequate histamine control but antihistamines provide only partial relief.

Family history:

- ✓ Her brother has hay fever

Medical history:

- ✓ There is a history of depression

Medication:

- ✓ She is currently taking cetirizine, 20 mg, daily

Physical exam:

- ✓ Angela's physical examination showed:
 - Conjunctival injection
 - Turbinates pale and swollen
 - Chest clear
 - Otherwise unremarkable
- ✓ Pulmonary function tests with methacholine challenge show mild-to-moderate airway hyperreactivity, consistent with asthma

Notes on Angela

Age: 32

Presentation:

- Recurrent rhinoconjunctivitis during late-summer
- Antihistamines provide only partial relief

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What do the allergy tests show?

- ✓ Adequate histamine control and a significant reaction to **alternaria**. Her tests was negative to dust mite, trees, grass, ragweed, aspergillus, cladosporium, dog, cat and cockroach.

Management:

- ✓ Limit alternaria exposure by shutting doors and windows from mid-July through first frost
- ✓ For rhinoconjunctivitis:
 - Seasonal intranasal corticosteroid
 - Seasonal topical antihistamine or mast cell stabilizing eye drops
 - Seasonal non-sedating antihistamine
- ✓ For asthma:
 - Inhaled corticosteroid twice a day, used seasonally
 - Short-acting β -agonist, as necessary
 - Consider adding long-acting beta agonist

Comments:

- ✓ **Alternaria is a summer mould.** Airborne particles are present from mid-July through to the first frost and are capable of causing rhinoconjunctivitis, but small particle size (*i.e.*, < 10 microns) allows for the penetration to distal airways. An allergy to alternaria is associated with increased risk of severe asthma attacks during the summer months. **Dx**

Diagnosis:
Alternaria
allergy with
rhinoconjunctivitis
and asthma

Upcoming cases...

- ✓ **August:** Herbal Hazard?
- ✓ **September:** Bagel Boggle

Dr. Binkley is an Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of Clinical Immunology and Allergy, University of Toronto and a Staff Member, St. Michael's Hospital and Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Toronto, Ontario.