

Survey reveals impact of hay fever on quality of life

A large-scale South African survey conducted by Pharma Dynamics aimed to assess the extent to which nasal allergies impact on key aspects of life, including mood, romance, work productivity and relationships.



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The survey, which polled more than 1700 allergy sufferers nationally, showed that symptoms are often severe enough to impair work performance and overall diminishes one's quality of life.

Mariska Fouche, spokesperson for Pharma Dynamics says when not managed effectively hay fever can also have a significant impact on romance and the way allergy sufferers behave towards their significant others.

- More than 54% of respondents said symptoms, such as sneezing and a persistently itchy and runny nose - usually accompanied by sinus pain and headaches - significantly influences their mood, causing them to have less patience with family, friends and co-workers.
- At least one in 10 of those involved in a romantic relationship felt that their allergy symptoms get in the way of romance.
- 25% felt less attractive or sexy and 20% said it impacted negatively on their self-esteem.
- Of those employed, two out of 10 said allergy symptoms considerably reduce their productivity at work.
- 7% felt it even impaired their driving performance.
- One third of respondents indicated that they often have to miss or compromise their enjoyment of sporting events, get-togethers, going out to dinner or the movies with friends or family, because of hay fever-related symptoms.
- Almost 60% confirmed that they weren't on any medication for their allergy, partly because they didn't feel there was a satisfactory product on the market.

"Despite the high prevalence of hay fever in SA (1 in 5 South Africans suffer from the condition), it is still often under-diagnosed, which not only keeps sufferers from enjoying life's activities to the full, but if left untreated could develop into an undesired complication such as asthma," Fouche says.

She notes that this may be as a result of patients perhaps not dosing or using medicines properly.

"If using a decongestant for example, it should only be taken for a maximum of five to seven days, because one can get used to its effects and could end up with a persistently blocked nose. Sudden withdrawal after long term use of decongestants can also cause severe rebound blockage.

"A nasal steroid is another effective treatment option, which when not applied correctly will greatly reduce its efficacy. The direction of the spray is very important, so always aim towards the back of the head and laterally towards the angle of the eye on the same side as the nostril.

"Other essential treatments include antihistamines, which tends to be more effective if taken early on in the season. Saline eye and nose drops are also highly effective in children and can be used up to six times a day, so is very safe," says Fouche.

For more information about hay fever or allergies, log on to www.allergyexpert.co.za.

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