

## **What is a Board-Certified Allergist/Immunologist?**

Allergists/immunologists are physicians specialized in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of problems involving the immune system. An allergist/immunologist is a physician certified in either internal medicine or pediatrics. They have completed an additional two years of training in allergy & immunology at an accredited training program. The allergist/immunologist, with his or her specialized training and expertise in managing allergies, allergic rhinitis, and asthma, can develop a treatment plan for each individual condition.

Board-certified allergists/immunologists have passed the examination given by the American Board of Allergy and Immunology. There are currently 4,460 Board certified allergists/immunologists in the United States.

Allergists/immunologists treat patients with the following problems and/or conduct research on:

- diseases of the respiratory tract, such as allergic rhinitis, sinusitis, asthma and hypersensitivity pneumonitis;
- skin disorders, including atopic dermatitis (eczema), contact dermatitis or urticaria (hives);
- gastrointestinal disorders caused by immune responses to foods;
- adverse reactions to drugs, other pharmacologic agents and diagnostic testing materials;
- diseases associated with autoimmune responses including arthritis;
- symptoms of disorders caused by immunodeficiency;
- stem cell, bone marrow and organ transplantation;
- immunogenetics.

### **Disease Management**

Studies show that managing allergies and asthma with the help of an allergist/immunologist can improve a patient's overall quality of life and reduce lost work or school days that result from allergies, asthma, sinusitis and allergic skin disorders. The role of the specialist is key in helping the 50 million Americans affected by these diseases take control of their disorders.

Collaboration between primary healthcare providers and an allergy/immunology specialist can help to identify specific allergy triggers, appropriate medication, therapy and prevention strategies to minimize exposure to triggers. Primary care physicians consult with allergist/immunologists when:

- Disease symptoms are severe.
- Clarification and identification of allergic or other triggers for the patient's rhinitis condition is needed.
- Medications are ineffective or cause adverse side effects.
- Allergen immunotherapy may be the best treatment options.
- The patient's quality of life is significantly affected by symptoms or medications.
- Complications of rhinitis develop, such as asthma, sinusitis or otitis media.
- Patients require systemic corticosteroids to control their symptoms.
- The duration of rhinitis symptoms is greater than 3 months.
- Education in allergen avoidance techniques is needed.