



September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012

## Allergies and Germs

Your handbag may be carrying more than you think! Researchers in the United Kingdom have found that a high percentage of handbags have more germs than the average toilet! And, not just on the outside. They recommend cleaning your bag (in and out) regularly and sanitizing your hands after placing them inside your bag. Other high-germ sources include keyboards, earphones and headphones. Ugh!

Singing is good for lung diseases: asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Doctors at London's Royal Brompton Hospital have started a singing "therapy" program after finding that the breathing techniques used by singers also benefitted those with lung problems. Study hasn't demonstrated any changes to the lung tissue itself, but the singers report that they do feel better.

Many susceptible people experience bronchoconstriction in response to physical exertion (also known as exercise-induced asthma). In the past, managing this narrowing of the airways has been through the use of inhalers (puffers), but a Finnish researcher has found that using vitamin C can reduce the problem by almost 50%. More work is needed to clarify this effect – stay tuned!

Allergies often "surge" in the fall in response to the mold/mildew spores in fallen leaves. The primary symptoms usually include runny, itchy noses and eyes. The first line of treatment is generally antihistamines. The newer ones tend to have less side effects than ones of the past. Decongestants can also help but for persistent and unresponsive symptoms, talk to your doctor about allergy shots or prescription medications.

Our pharmacists can provide you with a variety of tips for managing your allergies. Much relief can be found in home remedies and environmental management to reduce irritation and exposure. Come in and talk to us, we'd be happy to help.