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Allergies Linked to Parkinson's Disease

People who suffer from allergi rhinitis are 3 times more prone to develop Parkinson's disease later in life

Researchers found that people who suffer from chronic allergies caused by triggers such as dust, pets, spores etc. are 3 times more likely to develop Parkinson's disease later in life. They have conducted a study whose findings explicitly showed that rhinitis sufferers are more prone to become ill with the neurological degenerative disease than people who are not allergic. Rhinitis consists in the inflammation of the nasal mucous - the mucous membrane which lines the nose. It is caused by airborne triggers, such as dust, pollen etc. Symptoms of rhinitis are: sneezing, runny nose, nasal congestion, itching of the nose etc., similar to cold symptoms. Scientists from the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota investigated over a 20 years' period the cases of 196 individuals who suffered from Parkinson's disease. This group of almost 200 people was permanently compared to a group of healthy individuals of the same age and sex. Throughout the 20 years' period researchers closely checked up on the frequency of allergies and inflammatory diseases both in the group of Parkinson's patients and the one of healthy subjects. They came to the conclusion that allergies were more prone to occur in people with Parkinson's disease than in healthy individuals. On the overall, those who suffered from allergic rhinitis were found to be 2.9 more likely to develop the degenerative neurological condition later in life. "The association with Parkinson's disease is increased to almost three times that of someone who does not have allergic rhinitis. That's actually a pretty high elevation," said James Bower, neurologist at the Mayo Clinic and leader of the research. However, this does not mean that allergic rhinitis is a trigger for Parkinson's disease and that allergies cause the degenerative neurological disorder. It simply means that those who are airborne triggers hypersensitivity are more prone to get to suffer from Parkinson's. "I wouldn't worry if you have allergies. Treat the allergy symptoms you have to alleviate them at the time. At this point, we have no good evidence that this treatment will protect you from possibly developing Parkinson's disease later," Dr. Bower said. But how come these two rather different disorders are closely linked? Scientists explained that when affecting an individual, allergic rhinitis may cause death to some of brain nerve cells, action which is similar to that of Parkinson's disease. "People with allergic rhinitis mount an immune response with their allergies so they may be more likely to mount an immune response in the brain as well, which would produce inflammation. The inflammation produced may release certain chemicals in the brain and inadvertently kill brain cells as we see in Parkinson's. This discovery is exciting because in future we may be able to develop medications to block the inflammation," explained the leader of the research.