Contributed by Kristi Jordan, OTR/L

Individuals with autism and sensory integration differences often have difficulty with season changes. Season changes may mean changing clothing, changing routines, changing times, and even changing seasonal allergies.

There are some strategies that you can use to make the transition into a new season more bearable.

**Strategies for Seasonal Allergies and other Biomedical Concerns**

Changing seasons means seasonal allergies for many individuals. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), about 40 million Americans suffer from seasonal allergies. [http://www.cbsnews.com](http://www.cbsnews.com)

This may mean hay fever, increased sensitivity to environmental or food allergens, and changes in sleeping and eating habits.

**Prepare for the seasonal change.**

Prepare for seasonal allergy and biomedical changes by managing symptoms, seeking medical treatment when necessary, and by limiting exposure to known triggers and allergens. Strategies to reduce allergens can be found on the [Asthma and Allergy Foundation website](http://www.aaaai.org).
**Biomedical and Sensory Needs**

Biomedical and Sensory needs are the foundation of Intervention Ziggurat. In order for an individual to be able to live, learn, and work effectively, their biomedical and sensory needs must be met.

**Consider Behavior Changes:** If an individual has difficulty communicating and relating information related to how they are feeling, (i.e. pain or discomfort), but have noticeable changes in behavior, consider biological and medical factors. Look for observable signs, such as dark circles under the eyes, red or itchy eyes, sneezing, congestion, runny nose, sore throat, cough, fatigue or changes in activity level, GI issues, skin issues, and changes in appetite or sleep. Changes in mood and behavior can be a result of an individual not feeling well.

**Monitor Reactions:** If an individual responds to allergens in the environment or in food, limit exposure and seek treatment. If an individual has a known allergy or sensitivity, notify the school or workplace and inform staff, family, and friends of the issues and triggers. It may be a good idea to teach some strategies for self-advocacy and to equip the individual with allergy alert bracelets or cards for emergency situations. If emergency responses, such as using an EpiPen are necessary, creating a crisis/emergency plan and educating staff and individuals on the plan is also recommended. These plans should be updated regularly.

For more information on biomedical issues, read the article *An Introduction to Possible Biomedical Causes and Treatments for Autism Spectrum Disorders* by Marci Wheeler.

You may also find it helpful to check out services in Indiana and the provider list on our website http://www.iidc.indiana.edu

**Sensory Strategies:** Often allergy and biomedical sensitivities manifest in activity level. If an individual responds to exposure by becoming, hyperactive, choose sensory strategies that calm and soothe the nervous system. Include organizing activities, such as deep pressure and heavy work, but keep in mind if vibration causes itchy skin, this input should be avoided. If biomedical issues create drowsiness and fatigue, alerting activities are recommended, such as movement breaks. One example of this, the Brainworks App (photo above) allows the individual to choose their input based on how they feel. Understanding that there is a relationship between our medical and biological needs and our sensory needs helps us to respond more proactively to symptoms and changes.