Sublingual Allergy Drops: Another Option for Allergy Sufferers

’Tis the season for seasonal allergies, particularly ragweed. If you suffer from allergies, you’re not alone. There are more than 50 million allergy sufferers in the United States, and only 5 percent currently receive treatment with potential for long-term relief. The balance either suffer with symptoms, avoid exposure, or take prescriptions or over-the-counter medications. Now there’s another option available at FirstLight.

The treatment is called sublingual immunotherapy, known more informally as allergy drops. These drops help patients build tolerance to the causes of their allergy symptoms. Like allergy injections, the drops desensitize patients to substances that cause reactions by delivering small amounts of the allergen, or antigen, to the body. Unlike the shots, however, patients can take the drops at home, which eliminates the need for frequent office visits.

Allergy drops can be a good long-term solution for young children, asthmatics, highly sensitive patients, and those with related chronic conditions. Seasonal allergies, pet dander, dust, and mold can all be treated by allergy drops.

For more information about allergy drop treatment (also called the La Crosse Method™), contact Dr. Matthew Patterson at 320-679-1313. Dr. Patterson sees patients in Mora.

Telecardiology Delivers Care in Pine City

Terry and Vickie Miller dreaded trips to Minneapolis for Terry’s cardiology appointments. The 66-year-old Pine City resident first experienced cardiac issues in 2003. Then, in July 2013, he had double bypass surgery and needed regular cardiac care.

On appointment days, the Millers would get up early, drive an hour and 20 minutes, sometimes wait for two hours, and then turn around and head home, hoping they would miss rush hour and road construction.

In July, FirstLight started telecardiology services, five minutes from the Millers’ home.

Telecardiology, an offshoot of telemedicine, virtually brings a cardiologist from the Minneapolis Heart Institute into FirstLight’s Pine City clinic via technology, with something similar to Skype. Onsite nurses like Brent Nihart coordinate the care, making sure that the patient has completed—and the cardiologist has received—all of the requisite lab work and testing prior to the visit. At the appointment, the nurse communicates with the patient and cardiologist and operates the equipment, including the camera and the e-stethoscope, which allows the cardiologist to hear the patient’s heart in real time.

Before this program started, there were no cardiology services in the Pine City area. A FirstLight cardiologist from the Minneapolis Heart Institute travels to Mora weekly, but appointments tend to be booked weeks in advance. If an appointment was needed sooner, patients had to travel to Minneapolis.

“Being able to see a cardiologist right in Pine City has made it so much easier,” said Terry. “The doctor listened to everything we had to say, and it felt like he was right there in the room with us.”

Terry, who admits he isn’t very tech-savvy, was amazed with the technology, comparing it to “something out of Star Trek.”