A CONVERSATION ABOUT ALLERGIES

air pollution · allergic · asthma · cats · common · dangerous · genes · harmful · medication · peanuts · pollen · react · research · seasonal · serving · spring and early summer

RAYMOND: Hey, Elena--How's it going?

ELENA: I'm fine, thanks. I saw you in Professor Martinez' lecture yesterday.

RAYMOND: Yeah, that was interesting. I've been hearing a lot more about allergies lately. I had no idea they were so serious and so (1) _____!

ELENA: Right, and I was surprised to learn that when allergic reactions occur, the physical process is pretty much the same-whether it's a reaction to (2) _____ or to peanuts.

RAYMOND: That surprised me, too. It sounds like the body mistakes the substance it's allergic to for something (3) _____, and it tries to defend itself .

ELENA: Mmm hmm. The body produces antibodies, and the antibodies attach themselves to mast cells. And when that happens, the mast cells do what they're supposed to do-they (4) _____!

RAYMOND: Exactly, but it turns out the cells are reacting to things that are not

truly (5) _____.

ELENA: Yeah, they are, at least they're harmful to some people-things like strawberries, peanuts, and chocolate-I'm (6) _____ to all of those things.

RAYMOND: Wow-allergic to CHOCOLATE-that's really a shame

ELENA: It is. And how about you? Are you allergic to anything?

RAYMOND: No, at least not that I know of - FORTUNATELY!

ELENA: Yeah, you're lucky. My allergies are really bad sometimes. Besides the

food allergies ,I have (7) _____ allergies. They can be pretty bad, especially in

(8) _____ when the trees produce a lot of pollen, AND I have

(9) _____.

RAYMOND: Wow. You have ASTHMA TOO? So living downtown can't be easy

for you with all the (10) _____.

ELENA: Ugh, it isn't. The air pollution in this city is pretty bad. I also can't be

around (11) _____ for very long-and some kinds of plants and flowers make my

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asthma act up, too. Fortunately, I respond well to my asthma (12) _____. It

works really quickly, and I always take it with me.

RAYMOND: Well that's good. What about your FOOD allergies? I know those can be really serious for some people.

ELENA: It's true. My food allergies are actually a much bigger problem for me.

Like I said, I'm allergic to chocolate, strawberries, and peanuts. All things I LOVE!

RAYMOND: I'd HATE to be allergic to chocolate. I eat it every day.

ELENA: Lucky you! Well, it's not easy, but being allergic to (13) _____ is actually harder because you don't always know when food contains peanuts or peanut oil.

RAYMOND: Good point. I never thought about that. But that reminds me, do you remember Professor Martinez talking about a "no-peanuts policy" here on

campus?

ELENA: Oh, yeah. And the cafeteria and snack bar both stopped
(14) _____ anything with peanuts. Remember last year when that student had an allergic reaction and had to go to the hospital?

RAYMOND: Oh, right, I REMEMBER that. Professor Martinez called food allergies the "NEW" allergy problem.

ELENA: Yeah, that's right. She said the (15) _____ shows the number of children with food allergies rose 50 percent between 1997 and 2011, so it's a growing problem. I also read somewhere that between seven and eight percent of children nowadays have food allergies.

RAYMOND: Wow, that's a lot of kids! I wonder why so many of them have food

allergies these days?

ELENA: My doctor tells me that no one really knows, but there is a theory that

the cause is partly genetic] and partly environmental. In other words, our
(16) _____ and our environment both play a role.

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