that they trap airborne contaminants—
including dust, molds, copier toner and cigarette smoke—inside.

To avoid trouble, keep your windows open as much as possible, but be sure
to avoid cold or hot drafts. Ask that any harsh chemical cleaners be replaced
with less toxic brands.

If necessary, get an air-filtration sys-
tem—one that generates negative ions
as well as scrubs the air. Explanation:
Most air pollutants are positively
charged. Negative ions combine with
these positive particles, so contami-
nants fall to the floor.

If your office mates smoke, ask them
to refrain from doing so—or ask to be
moved elsewhere. If necessary, petition
your manager to make your office
smoke-free.

Resource: Doctors Ought to Care, 1423
Harper St., Augusta, Georgia 30912.

Many respiratory problems clear up
under the proper temperature and
humidity levels. Rule of thumb: It’s best
to maintain a room temperature of 73°F
to 79°F in the summer and 68°F to
74°F in winter. Humidity should be
kept between 30% and 70%—install a
humidifier if necessary.

Stress. This usually does not stem
from work itself, but rather, from nega-
tive attitudes about the work. Helpful:
Replace negative thoughts with positive
affirmations.

Example: I choose not to think ...
I choose to think ... (fill in the
last blank with a positive thought).

Don’t blame yourself for unavoidable
problems on the job. If you find you
cannot stop your negative thoughts,
consider getting a new job... or seeing a
counselor.

Always try to communicate clearly
and honestly with your colleagues. List-
then to be careful about not appear
directness and honesty. Avoid commu-
nication that is overly passive or aggres-
sive. Be true to yourself and your
needs.

One especially effective anti-stress
technique is the quieting reflex. It takes
only six seconds and is surprisingly
effective. Procedure:
Become aware of any worry, anno-
ynce or anxiety.

Smile to yourself.
Repeat to yourself a cue phrase, such
as, Deep relaxation or I am relaxed.
Inhale easily and naturally while
mentally counting one, two, three. Then
exhale while counting to yourself,
three, two, one.
While you are exhaling, let your jaw,
tongue and shoulders all go loose. Feel
a wave of limpness, heaviness and
warmth flowing down your body to
your toes.

Dr. Gerald Epstein
Mount Sinai Medical Center

You Can
Beat Allergies
Through Mental Imagery

Millions of Americans with allergies make regular trips to their physi-
cians for dietary prescriptions, weekly injections, air filters and other
standard treatments. Yet few sufferers ever find true relief.

Reason: Although it’s widely known that the mind exerts a powerful
influence on our physical well-being, most doctors treat allergies as a strictly physical
problem. What they’re missing: In many cases, allergic symptoms are a physical manifest-
ration of an emotional or social problem. And allergies that do stem primarily from
physical factors are often complicated by emotional factors.

Power Through Knowledge

Dr. Suzann Opari
University of Alabama

Blood-Pressure Numbers
What they really mean

If you’re one of the 57 million Ameri-
cans with high blood pressure, you
probably keep careful track of your
blood-pressure readings. But do you
really know what they mean? The fig-
ures contain important information that
your doctor uses to choose a course of
treatment.

As blood is pumped by your heart
throughout your body, it presses
against the walls of your blood vessels.
When the heart beats, it sends out a
surge of blood, raising the pressure
within the arteries and the smaller
blood vessels branching off from them.
When the heart rests between beats,
the pressure drops.
The higher pressure, when the heart
is pumping, is called systolic.
The lower pressure, when the heart
rests, is called diastolic.
The two figures are written as a fraction
with the systolic on top and the
diastolic below.
A person with normal blood pressure
would have a reading in the range of
110-140 systolic and 60-90 diastolic.
Although you would know if your
body temperature rose or if your heart
rate increased, your blood pressure can
reach dangerously high levels without
your feeling a thing. Self-defense: Blood
pressure should be maintained at a
level that is healthy for you, as deter-
mined by your physician.

A New Look at Allergies

All allergies, regardless of their origin,
are identical in one respect. Allergies
always represent a person’s efforts
—unwanted as they might be—to rid
the body of certain aversive substances
(allergens).

What the body deems aversive, of
course, varies from person to person.
For many it’s pollen or other airborne
contaminants. But it might also be
radon gas seeping up from the floor...
dairy products...sunscreen addi-
tives...pets...or even other human
beings.

Example: One man came to me com-
plaining of multiple allergies only to discover
that he was really allergic to certain family
members. The mere presence of these rela-
tives was enough to trigger sneezing and a
runny nose.

In other cases, allergic reactions are
brought on simply by the sound of
another person’s voice or a particular
hand gesture.

What to Do

The most effective way to cure an
allergy is simply to eliminate the aller-
gen altogether. Unfortunately, this is
impossible in many cases. Alternate solu-
tion: The body must be trained to
respond differently in the presence of
the allergen.

Mental imagery is often helpful in this
regard. Procedure: The moment you find
yourself troubled by allergic symptoms,
Health Confidential interviewed Suzann Opari, MD, director, Hypertension Program, University of Alabama at
Birmingham.
those members who were contributing to the trouble. In these sessions, the family explored those aspects of their interactions that were creating the friction that, in turn, was giving rise to his allergies. What was needed to alleviate allergies was more effective communication. No medicines, no shots. The process of their mistaken communication patterns differs from regular psychotherapy. Psychotherapists focus on helping clients understand certain patterns of behavior. I focus instead on ways to correct those patterns. To heal an allergy, it takes a sensitive medical practitioner. Often such practitioners are not necessarily well-known allergists, but professionals outside conventional medicine—acupuncturists, chiropractors, osteopaths, homeopaths, etc.

If you have difficulty locating such a practitioner, contact the American Holistic Medical Association, 2727 Fairview Ave. E., Seattle 98102.

DERMATOGlyphICS

Dr. Robert J. Meier, Indiana University

Palm Reading & Sole Reading
What Your Hands and Feet Say About Your Health

A fascinating field of scientific research, dermatoglyphics, could one day help doctors identify people who are at high risk for developing diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis and breast cancer. Such diseases, scientists theorize, may be predicted by unusual patterns on the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet.

To find out more about this connection, Health Confidential asked one of the country’s foremost authorities on the subject...

What exactly is dermatoglyphics?

It’s the study of the epidermal ridge surface—the lines and marks—of the fingers, palms, toes and soles. These are the only parts of the body that have these particular markings.

What’s the connection between these surfaces and disease?

During the prenatal period, while the fetus is developing, disturbances that originate from genetic or environmental sources may produce a defect or place the person at risk for developing a defect later in life.

Those defects that do originate at the end of the first trimester—when the dermatoglyphic features are forming—may show up in a person’s dermatoglyphics.

How will doctors be able to use dermatoglyphics?

Dermatoglyphics could potentially be used to screen newborns for birth defects. It’s already moderately successful for diagnosing babies born with Down's syndrome and abnormal numbers of sex chromosomes, which causes growth and developmental problems.

What does the palm of someone with Down's syndrome look like?

A common feature is an unusual crease that runs straight across the palm, from side to side. Although this crease occurs in normal people about 2% of the time, it has been observed in 50% of all people suffering from Down's syndrome.

Can you offer any other examples that doctors are using now?

No other findings have been nearly as consistent or proved as well, but other important associations have been found.

Example: One study has indicated that women with an unusual number of whorl patterns on the tips of their fingers have a greater likelihood of going on to develop breast cancer.

Important: Dermatoglyphics should only be used as a supplement to more reliable diagnostic procedures.

What other disorders are dermatoglyphists (scientists interested in the study of dermatoglyphics) exploring?

We believe that we may one day be able to predict who is at risk for developing dyslexia, childhood leukemia, schizophrenia, hyperactivity, rheumatoid arthritis, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, lupus, alcoholism, cirrhosis of the liver...even gastrointestinal disorders.

But large groups of people will have to be studied before we can establish statistical associations between skin patterns and specific disorders.

How could diagnosing a person with abnormal ridge patterns prove helpful?

If we can identify them early, those people who are at high risk for developing a specific disease could be advised to take preventive measures, watch for the development of symptoms and get regular exams.

Health Confidential interviewed Robert J. Meier, PhD, professor of anthropology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. He is one of the country's foremost authorities on anthropological dermatoglyphics.