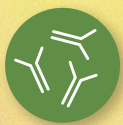


Your Guide to Managing Seasonal Allergies

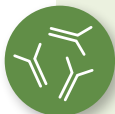


Your Guide to Managing Seasonal Allergies

Seasonal allergies develop when the body's immune system overreacts to something in the environment, usually during spring, summer, or fall, when certain plants and trees pollinate.

As we get outside to enjoy this season, some people will inevitably suffer from seasonal allergies. In fact, according to the CDC, nearly 8% of the population suffers from allergies every spring and deals with symptoms such as watery eyes, nasal congestion, and sinus pain.

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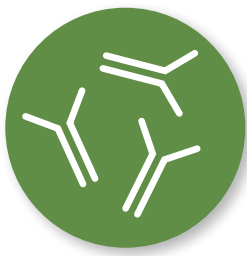
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Cooper Department of
Allergy and Immunology



What are Spring Allergies?

Allergies are a misguided reaction to foreign substances by your immune system, your body's defense system against "invaders." Normally, the human body defends itself against harmful things such as viruses or bacteria. But sometimes your defense system mistakenly attacks relatively harmless things such as dust, mold, or pollen.

These things are called allergens—substances that can be breathed or swallowed, or that touch the skin. Common allergic reactions, such as allergic rhinitis (hay fever), are linked to an antibody called immunoglobulin E (IgE) that is produced by the immune system.

Over time, you may become used to constant symptoms, such as sneezing, nasal congestion, or wheezing. It's important to know, however, that these symptoms can often be stopped or controlled with the help of an allergist, a doctor who specializes in treating allergies—and you can have a better quality of life.





Allergy Triggers

When exposed to an allergy trigger, or allergen, your body starts making a large amount of IgE antibodies. When you are exposed to the same allergen again, you may have a reaction. Symptoms of an allergic reaction will differ based on the type and amount of allergen, and how your body's immune system reacts to it.

The most common allergens are:

- Pollen
- Mold
- Household dust, dust mites and their waste
- Animal dander, urine, or oil from skin
- Chemicals used for manufacturing
- Certain foods
- Medicine
- Feathers
- Insect stings
- Cockroaches and their waste
- Latex





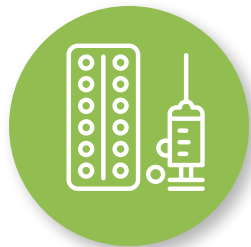
Symptoms of Allergies

An allergic reaction can affect any part of the body, including the skin, eyes, lining of the stomach, nose, sinuses, throat, and lungs. These are the places where immune system cells are found to fight off germs that are in breathed in, swallowed, or come in contact with the skin.

Allergic reactions can cause:

- Stuffy nose, sneezing, itching, runny nose, and itching in the ears or roof of the mouth
- Red, itchy, watery eyes
- Red, itchy, dry skin
- Hives or itchy welts
- Itchy rash
- Asthma symptoms, such as shortness of breath, coughing, and wheezing





Common Treatments

Your allergist may recommend one or more medications to control symptoms. Some of the most widely recommended drugs are available without a prescription (over the counter) others, including some nose drops, require a prescription.

Treatment depends on your age, overall health, tolerance for certain medications, how severe your symptoms are, and your personal preferences.

Treatment for allergies may include:

Allergy shots (immunotherapy) which can be used for people with allergic rhinitis, conjunctivitis (eye reaction), allergy-triggered asthma, or those with a stinging bug allergy.

Since it can take 6 to 18 months for allergy shots to become effective, you may need to take allergy medications in the meantime.

These medicines can include:

- Steroid nasal sprays
- Antihistamines
- Decongestants
- Asthma medication (controlling asthma may help control allergic rhinitis in some patients)





How to Prevent Allergies

Prevention is also an important part of managing allergies. You can take the following steps to avoid exposure to the substances that trigger your allergies.

- Stay indoors when the pollen count is high and on windy days
- Dust-proof your home, particularly the bedroom
- When possible, get rid of carpeting, Venetian blinds, down-filled blankets or pillows, closets filled with clothes
- Wash bedding, curtains, and clothing often in hot water to get rid of dust mites
- Keep bedding in dust covers when possible
- Cover mattress and box spring with impermeable covers
- No feather pillows or down blankets and limit stuffed animals
- Use air conditioning instead of opening the windows
- Put a dehumidifier in damp parts of the home, but remember to clean it often
- Wear a face mask when working in the yard
- Go on vacation by the beach during the heaviest part of the pollen season





Cooper Department of Allergy and Immunology

Cooper allergists and immunologists see patients of all ages, including infants, children, adults, and senior citizens (geriatric population). If you suffer from allergies, no matter the severity, we can help to lessen or eliminate your symptoms and make you more comfortable.

We evaluate, diagnose and treat the following allergy-related conditions:

- Allergic conjunctivitis (eye itching and redness)
- Allergic rhinitis (hay fever)
- Anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction)
- Angioedema (swelling)
- Asthma
- Atopic dermatitis (eczema)
- Contact dermatitis (skin reactions to irritants)
- Drug allergy
- Eosinophilic esophagitis
- Food allergy
- Insect sting allergy
- Latex allergy

Available diagnostic procedures and treatments include:

- Pulmonary function testing
- Skin testing for allergy diagnosis
- Patch testing
- Allergen immunotherapy (allergy shots)
- Detailed patient education

In addition, we participate in numerous clinical research studies on asthma and atopic dermatitis.

If you find that over-the-counter medications are not helping, or if you get a stuffy nose, sinus infections, headaches, or ear infections on top of seasonal allergies, it might be time to consult with an allergist. They can help figure out what you are allergic to and teach you how to avoid your allergy triggers.

Meet Our Allergy Specialist



Maria Lania-Howarth, MD, FAAAAI, FAAAAI

Head, Division of Allergy/Immunology

Co-Director, ENT/Allergy Curriculum, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University

Board Certifications: American Board of Allergy & Immunology (Allergy & Immunology - General)

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