

# Seasonal ALLERGIES



# Seasonal Allergies: an Introductory Guide

Springtime is thought of as a time of renewal. Tulips seem to pop up overnight, opening their petals to reveal their bright faces. Daffodils push up through the earth to reveal their nodding trumpet-like flowers, too. Animals nuzzle their newborn young and birds sing, attracting mates and preparing nests. It's a wonderful time. But, unfortunately for some of us, all the pollen in the air keeps us from enjoying this season. New blooms bring massive amounts of pollen, which sends sensitive allergy sufferers into coughing, sneezing fits that makes them miserable. Instead of getting outside to enjoy the warmth and beauty, they must stay indoors or face daily allergy symptoms.

## My Story

This was me for many years, starting with puberty. Every year round about April or May, the sneezing fits, runny nose, and watery eyes started and pretty much continued through September. I hated summer. First, I tried over the counter conventional remedies and the first few years those helped. But, then their effectiveness grew less and less until I was forced to try prescription allergy medicine. The few years I used those, I put up with dryness that gave me a bloody nose. And, every fall, I suffered from a sinus infection. Enough was enough. There *had* to be a better way.

In college, I discovered that better way and when I graduated, I began my journey to wellness. Now, I never suffer from seasonal allergies. By using the same principles, my younger son no longer suffers from them, either. (My older son suffers from many, many allergies but is inconsistent in his commitment to the principles I learned. So, he still suffers!)

The following information will give you a little more insight into seasonal allergies, and some natural ways you can start to find relief.

## The Causes

First of all, seasonal allergies (which are often spring allergies) get their name from allergens. These are like triggers that can cause all those allergy symptoms, like coughing, sneezing, runny nose, headaches, and even nausea.

The allergens can be a little different depending on the season, but these are some of the most common ones, especially in the spring and summer months:

## Pollen

At this time of year, plants produce high quantities of pollen.

Pollen is created by plants as a portion of their reproductive system. As the pollen flies through the air, it lands on other plants and fertilizes them. Unfortunately, some people have allergic reactions to such heavy concentrations of pollen. When allergic people encounter the airborne pollen, their immune system interprets the presence of the pollen as an invasion. This can cause the body to launch an attack. It also releases hormones that trigger the effects you feel when you are sick.

Pollen allergies can cause you to experience symptoms like: itchy eyes or throat, running nose, watery eyes, respiratory discomfort. There are different types of pollen that can cause you to experience symptoms of these types, but not everyone is allergic to all types of pollen.

## Insects

There are also insects that can trigger an immune reaction. Proteins that make up the exoskeleton of insects like dust mites are recognized by the body as something that is associated with pathogens. So, if you breathe or come in heavy contact with those types of insects or their fecal matter, then your histamine levels will skyrocket.

Insect related allergies are fairly common, but many people don't know that they're experiencing them. The most common type of insect associated with this are dust mites that live in your home. They feed on skin cells that collect around your bedding and heavily trafficked areas like carpet and upholstery.

Insect allergies are known to cause many similar reactions to pollen allergies. These can include breathing issues and even skin irritations. It primarily comes down to the level of exposure.

## Mold

Another very common cause of allergy symptoms is mold. Molds can grow nearly anywhere there is a buildup of moisture, so as the months become warmer, molds can develop in hidden places around your home. These molds create spores that can get into your lungs and cause irritation. In some cases, molds can even be quite dangerous and require special treatment to get rid of them.

Some molds are relatively harmless, but most heavy amounts of mold can cause irritation in the throat and nasal area. Companies now offer mold test kits that allow you to see what types of mold are present in your home.

## Allergy Symptoms

Not sure if what you are experiencing is allergies? There are quite a few common signs and symptoms of an allergy attack, but some of them can also occur with other illnesses. It is more about a combination of symptoms, and not having signs of illnesses like the cold or flu, that might point toward allergies. So, if you don't have a fever or body aches and chills, your mucus stays clear and watery, and symptoms seem to worsen outdoors, you may be suffering from seasonal allergies.

Some of the more common symptoms of seasonal and spring allergies include:

- Watery eyes
- Itchy eyes
- Runny nose
- Stuffy nose
- Sneezing
- Ear problems
- Itchy throat

These are the signs most people think of when they think of allergies. However, others might have additional symptoms, including:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting

## Diagnosis

Allergies are often a mild condition to deal with, and definitely a common one. However, it is still a good idea to see a doctor if over the counter or natural meds aren't working. You should also see a doctor if you are just not sure if what you're dealing with is actually from seasonal allergies.

**Important – If you have painful rashes or trouble breathing, seek medical attention immediately.**

### How are Allergies Diagnosed?

To diagnose allergies, doctors will use a combination of methods.

- Considering your symptoms, and ruling out other causes, like the common cold.
- Taking blood samples for allergy tests.
- Doing skin surface allergy tests.

Many experts in this field of study recommend full disclosure of medical history. This is because the type of testing that will be used is generally chosen based on a number of

factors including age, occupation, symptoms, level of exposure, and even hobbies. A certified doctor will be sure that the methods they employ are the most effective, and they're not likely to be conducted in a random way.

Once the doctor has learned what kinds of things could be causing your allergies, they will most likely give you a personalized plan that will help you to combat your allergy symptoms and maximize your opportunity to gain relief.

## Treatments

Now for treatments! The good news is that there are many options available to you if you suffer from seasonal allergies, both with over-the-counter medications and prescribed, as well as some natural remedies if you want to go that route. These recommendations are a *short-term* solution, not a long-term one. Full recovery from seasonal allergies, as I described earlier, can't be covered in this short report.

Here is a look at the main methods for treating allergies and allergy symptoms in the short-term.

### Over the Counter Medication

If you are struggling with your allergy symptoms, there are many over-the-counter remedies that are available at any drug store. These can be a quick and affordable option, and a very effective one as well.

Medications of this type are quite popular because they are easy to find, and they don't require you to see any type of medical professional. Most of them are focused on blocking the histamine levels in your blood. This should help you to experience fewer of the symptoms associated with allergies.

However, be aware of some of the side effects, such as drowsiness or dry nose and eyes, and make sure you take them safely and only as directed. And remember my story. Some people can become tolerant of these medications such that they become ineffective.

### Prescribed Medication

For those of you with more severe allergies, or whose bodies don't react well to the over-the-counter options, you can also talk to your doctor about prescribed medications.

These can include pills taken by mouth, but they can also be shots designed to help suppress your immune responses. Many doctors will prescribe medicated nasal sprays that are aimed at limiting nasal congestion and irritation, and they tend to be relatively effective.

Be aware that sometimes the immune suppressing effects can make you more vulnerable to illness. And, these prescriptions can have other unpleasant side effects and be quite expensive, too.

## Natural Remedies

There are also some natural options available to you. A large portion of the remedies that are available are related to making changes to your environment and not as much about changes to your body.

### Environmental Changes

These changes can be things like replacing your air filters with **HEPA filters** so that you can more efficiently filter pollen out of the air system of your home. People often find that **keeping the windows closed** during those times of year can help reduce the amount of pollen coming into the home, especially during later times in the day.

It's always a good idea to **remove and wash your clothes** as soon as you get home, then take a cleansing bath or shower to get the pollen off of your body so that it doesn't spread all over your home.

**Vacuuming and washing bedding frequently** can help reduce both pollen and the presence of mites and insects that could cause irritation, so it's always a good move to keep your bedroom clean and free of debris. This also means, if possible, reducing the amount of furniture and carpeting in the bedroom.

### Other Natural Helps

**Your diet** can also play a role in your allergy symptoms and how you experience them. A lot of experts claim that **eating local honey** can help people to deal with their symptoms, but that kind of remedy doesn't work for everyone. There are many **herbal teas** that can limit the symptoms you experience, but effectiveness varies from person to person. Quality is a concern, too.

These teas are known to include:

- milk thistle
- red clover
- yarrow
- nettle
- astragalus
- horseradish

In addition to teas, essential oils offer some help, too. The ones most commonly used are:

- Peppermint
- Moroccan Chamomile
- Niaouli

**Nasal irrigation** is known to be effective and is recommended for people who have serious issues with their breathing and allergy symptoms. This is because nasal irrigation is a physical way to remove allergens from your nasal cavity. When the saline solution enters your nasal cavity, it can actually wash the pollens and other allergen right out of your breathing areas. This can help stop some allergy symptoms simply because the irritants are no longer in your sensitive breathing passages.

## How are Summer Allergies Different?

While you can absolutely experience seasonal allergies during ANY season, most people tend to get them the worst in the spring. This is due to the higher pollen counts and new plant and flower growth that occurs after the winter season is over.

However, you might get allergy symptoms more in the summertime, which is very similar, but slightly different than spring allergies.

The first difference is in what actually causes allergy symptoms in the summer. It is typically from certain types of grasses that are prevalent in this season, such as:

- Rye
- Timothy
- Orchard
- Bermuda

And yes, allergens like mold and pollen can still affect you well into the summer. The allergy symptoms will also be very similar to what you have with spring allergies.