

Seasonal allergies: Nip them in the bud

Relieve seasonal allergies with these tried-and-true techniques.

Spring means flower buds and blooming trees — and if you're one of the millions of people who have seasonal allergies, it also means sneezing, congestion, runny nose and other bothersome symptoms. Seasonal allergies — also called hay fever and allergic rhinitis — can make you miserable. But before you settle for plastic flowers and artificial turf, try these simple strategies to keep seasonal allergies under control.

Reduce your exposure to allergy triggers

To reduce your exposure to the things that trigger your allergy signs and symptoms (allergens):

- Stay indoors on dry, windy days — the best time to go outside is after a good rain, which helps clear pollen from the air.
- Delegate lawn mowing, weed pulling and other gardening chores that stir up allergens.
- Remove clothes you've worn outside; you may also want to shower to rinse pollen from your skin and hair.
- Don't hang laundry outside — pollen can stick to sheets and towels.
- Wear a dust mask if you do outside chores.

Take extra steps when pollen counts are high

Seasonal allergy signs and symptoms can flare up when there's a lot of pollen in the air. These steps can help you reduce your exposure:

- Check your local TV or radio station, your local newspaper, or the Internet for pollen forecasts and current pollen levels.
- If high pollen counts are forecasted, start taking allergy medications before your symptoms start.
- Close doors and windows at night or any other time when pollen counts are high.
- Avoid outdoor activity in the early morning when pollen counts are highest.

Keep indoor air clean

There's no miracle product that can eliminate all allergens from the air in your home, but these suggestions may help:

- Use the air conditioning in your house and car.
- If you have forced air heating or air conditioning in your house, use high-efficiency filters and follow regular maintenance schedules.
- Keep indoor air dry with a dehumidifier.
- Use a portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter in your bedroom.
- Clean floors often with a vacuum cleaner that has a HEPA filter.

Source: Mayo Clinic
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→ Seasonal allergies

Allergies and complementary medicine

When trees, flowers and grasses start to bloom each year, you might find yourself feeling awful if you suffer from seasonal allergies, or “hay fever.” It's caused by a reaction to the pollens released by many plants in the spring, summer or fall. Symptoms can include runny nose, scratchy throat, nasal congestion, sneezing, and itchy, red or watery eyes.

Many people manage their seasonal allergy symptoms by taking medications, such as antihistamines or decongestants. But some people try complementary health approaches, such as saline nasal irrigation, butterbur, honey, acupuncture and other practices.

If you're considering any of these complementary methods for the relief of seasonal allergy symptoms, be sure to learn what the science says. Get details at <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/allergies>.

This new NIH web page can help you learn about specific complementary practices. Get an overview of the current evidence on effectiveness and safety. And always remember to talk to your health care provider about the best ways to manage your seasonal allergy symptoms.

Source: *NIH News in Health*
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<http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/issue/may2013/capsule2>

Hay Fever vs. Colds

	Hay Fever	Colds
Signs	Signs can include running or stuffed nose, sneezing, wheezing, itchy and watery eyes.	Signs can include fever, aches and pains stuffed nose, sneezing, and watery eyes.
Warning Time	Symptoms begin right away.	Symptoms usually take a few days to start.
Duration	Symptoms last as long as you are around the allergen	Symptoms should clear up within a week.

Pollen Allergy

Of all the things that can cause an allergy, pollen is one of the most common. Many people know pollen allergy as hay fever, but health experts usually refer to it as “seasonal allergic rhinitis.” This simply means an allergy to pollen that makes your nose run during certain seasons.

An allergy is a specific reaction of your body’s immune system to a normally harmless substance. People who have allergies often are sensitive to more than one substance. In addition to pollen from plants, other airborne allergens that can cause allergic reactions include materials from house dust mites, pet dander, and cockroaches.

Symptoms of pollen allergy include runny nose, sneezing, itchy eyes, congestion of the nose, and red and watery eyes.

Some grasses that produce pollen:

- Timothy grass
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Johnson grass
- Bermuda grass
- Redtop grass
- Orchard grass
- Sweet vernal grass

Some trees that produce pollen:

- Oak
- Ash
- Elm
- Hickory
- Pecan
- Box elder
- Mountain cedar

Source: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
Copyright January 2012
<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/allergicDiseases/Documents/PollenAllergyFactSheet.pdf>

Seasonal Allergies: Treatment

Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antihistamines • Decongestants • Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antihistamines • Nasal steroids • Decongestants
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often with soap and water • Avoid close contact with anyone with a cold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid those things that you are allergic to, such as pollen, house dust mites, mold, pet dander, cockroaches
Complications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sinus infection • Middle ear infection • Asthma exacerbation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sinus infection • Asthma exacerbation

Source: National Library of Medicine
Copyright 2011 Issue: Volume 6 Number 2 Page 20
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine/issues/summer11/articles/summer11pg20.html>



Healthy recipe: asparagus with lemon sauce

Ingredients:

- 20 medium asparagus spears, rinsed and trimmed
- 1 fresh lemon, rinsed (for peel and juice)
- 2 Tbsp reduced-fat mayonnaise
- 1 Tbsp dried parsley
- 1/8 tsp ground black pepper
- 1/16 tsp salt



Instructions:

Place 1 inch of water in a 4-quart pot with a lid. Place a steamer basket inside the pot, and add asparagus. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium. Cook for 5–10 minutes, until asparagus is easily pierced with a sharp knife. Do not overcook.

While the asparagus cooks, grate the lemon zest into a small bowl. Cut the lemon in half and squeeze the juice into the bowl. Use the back of a spoon to press out extra juice and remove pits. Add mayonnaise, parsley, pepper, and salt. Stir well. Set aside.

When the asparagus is tender, remove the pot from the heat. Place asparagus spears in a serving bowl. Drizzle the lemon sauce evenly over the asparagus (about 1½ teaspoons per portion) and serve.

Nutrition Facts:

Calories 39	Total Fat 0 g
Saturated Fat 0 g	Sodium 107 mg
Total Carbohydrate 7 g	Dietary Fiber 2 g
Potassium 241 mg	

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute