



BalanceHealth[®] Newsletter

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Beating Your Springtime Allergies

You may have allergies if you spend much of the springtime sneezing. You probably are sensitive to one of the many allergens in the environment if your temperature remains normal but your sneezing and watery, itchy eyes linger for more than a week.

But what's causing your symptoms? If your symptoms occur only seasonally, it could be plant pollens such as those from weeds, grasses and trees or outdoor molds, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI). If your symptoms occur throughout the year, it could be a perennial "indoor" allergen, such as dust mites or pet dander.

Seasonal allergies are often called "hay fever." This condition is also called allergic rhinitis. Sneezing and a stuffy, watery nose are the main symptoms of hay fever, according to the American Lung Association (ALA). Other symptoms include itchy or red eyes; itchy nose, throat, mouth or ears; and trouble sleeping because of a stuffy nose.

Helpful steps to take

If you do have allergies, these steps will help you reduce your discomfort.

Limit outdoor activities. During allergy season, be sure to avoid the flowers, trees and grasses that bother you. Have someone else do the yard work, and shower and wash your hair after being outdoors.

Keep windows closed during allergy season and use air conditioning, which will help keep pollens out of the indoor air.

Keep your home heating and cooling system clean. A monthly filter change is critical if you're sensitive to dust. New electrostatic filters contain fibers that create a mild charge to attract dust particles, pollen, dander, mold and mildew spores and other airborne allergens more effectively than old-style paper filters.

Try a duct-cleaning service. Hire a reliable company to clean dust and dirt from your air duct system.



For more information or advice about allergies, contact your Wellness Coordinator by calling

1.800.327.2255

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Update your vacuum cleaner. Use allergen approved bags (slightly more expensive) or choose a newer bagless vacuum cleaner with HEPA filtration. Some vacuums deposit dust directly into a water filled canister.

Avoid smoke and other irritating fumes -- they can aggravate your allergies. Don't allow visitors to smoke in your home. Use spray colognes, hair spray and other aerosol products sparingly.

Limit alcohol consumption. Nasal passages swell and secrete more mucus when you've been drinking.

Reduce mold exposure. Clean bathrooms frequently and run the exhaust fan during and after showering. Fix leaky faucets, or any other plumbing leaks. Invest in a dehumidifier if the basement or some other area of your house tends to be damp or you live in a high humidity climate such as Florida.

Be proactive with pet allergies. Wash your hands after playing with a pet. Declare your bedroom strictly "off limits" to pets. Ask your veterinarian about anti allergenic pet shampoos.

Over-the-counter (OTC) antihistamines are available including the non-drowsy antihis-

tamines that previously were prescription only. A trial on these medications may help your allergies. In addition OTC eye drops containing antihistamines and vasoconstrictors are available for watery itchy eyes. A nasal spray of cromolyn sodium (Nasal-crom) is available without prescription and reduces allergic response of the nasal mucosa. If these easily available medications don't relieve symptoms, talk to your health care provider about prescription medications that may help.

Health care providers have access to a broader armamentarium than is available OTC.

- Prescription antihistamines and decongestants
- Inhaled nasal steroids (Flonase, Nasonex)
- Steroid eye drops for short term relief of allergic reaction
- Eye drops that stabilize mast cells (Zaditor, Opticrom)
- Long-acting corticosteroid injections (usually limited to once per season)

With proper control of your environment plus appropriate OTC or prescription medications you should find relief from your allergies.

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