

Your COVID-19 facemask may also be protecting you from allergies

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The end of summer means the beginning of fall allergy season. But you've probably already got at least one protective measure in place: your COVID-19 mask.

"Masks that people use for protection from COVID-19, particularly those that filter out more particles like the N95 or KN95 masks, also tend to filter out [pollen](#)," says allergist Luz Fonacier, MD, president of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. "As we face an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases nationwide, and as more people are putting their masks back on, they may find their [allergy symptoms](#) decreasing a bit."

Ragweed pollen is the biggest [allergy](#) trigger every fall and should be avoided, along with other fall allergy triggers like mold and grass pollen. Ragweed usually starts releasing pollen with cool nights and [warm days](#) in August and can last into September and October. And most people who are allergic to spring plants are also allergic to ragweed. Keep in mind that windy days can mean heightened allergy symptoms because wind can carry the pollen from ragweed, grasses, and trees up to 100 miles from its source.

Keep these four tips from ACAAI in mind as you head into the fall allergy season:

1. **Start your meds early**—Climate change may be causing an earlier and longer fall allergy season. Look for your symptoms earlier than you previously may have experienced them. Think about starting your allergy meds 2-3 weeks before you normally see them to get ahead of your symptoms. Don't stop your medications until pollen counts have been down for about two weeks.
2. **See your allergist**—If you've noticed your allergy and [asthma symptoms](#) seem worse lately, make an appointment with your allergist. Allergists are specially trained to diagnose, manage and treat your allergies and asthma, and to create a personal plan to help you lead the life you want to live. An [allergist](#) can also provide immunotherapy—[allergy shots](#) or tablets—which target

your exact triggers and can greatly reduce the severity of your symptoms. Allergy shots can also prevent the development of asthma in some children with seasonal allergies.

3. **Banish the mold**—Mold can be particularly troublesome in the fall and can hide in your basement, bathroom, a leaky cabinet under your sink, or in a pile of dead leaves in your backyard. The key to reducing mold is moisture control. Be sure to use bathroom fans and clean any standing water immediately. Scrub any visible mold from surfaces with detergent and water, and dry completely. You can also help ward off mold by keeping home humidity below 60% and cleaning gutters regularly.
4. **Keep fall allergy triggers at bay**—The first line of defense in controlling fall allergies is to avoid triggers. If you go outside, wear a hat and sunglasses to keep pollen out of your eyes. Keep your car and home windows closed, and your air conditioning on in both places. Leave your shoes at the door and throw clothes in the washing machine. Shower and wash hair in the evening before bed so you're not sleeping with pollen and getting it on your pillow and in your nose. Monitor pollen and mold counts online so you can determine when it's best to stay inside.

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI)

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