

# Allergy season is near: Be prepared

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Spring allergies are a perennial annoyance, but if you're focusing on the pandemic, they still could catch you by surprise, an expert says.

"People still have COVID on their minds," said Dr. Mark Corbett, president of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.

"They might not be thinking about spring allergies, so symptoms could sneak up on them," Corbett said in a college news release.

"One of the most important tools for battling spring allergies is to get ahead of symptoms," he advised. "Begin taking your [allergy medications](#) two to three weeks before your itching and sneezing normally start to occur. And be aware that, thanks to climate change, symptoms may appear even earlier than normal."

Both COVID-19 and spring allergies can cause symptoms such as cough, fatigue and headache. But COVID—especially the [Omicron variant](#)—can cause more [nasal congestion](#), [runny nose](#), sneezing, postnasal drainage and symptoms of a sinus infection, while allergies rarely cause a fever.

If you think you might have COVID-19, get tested as soon as possible. If it's not COVID-19 and your symptoms have been dragging on for a while, get tested for seasonal allergies, Corbett advised.

It's important to know your [allergy triggers](#) so you can treat them properly.

You may be tempted to open your windows to bring fresh spring air into your home or car, but that's a bad idea if you're allergic to pollen, Corbett said. Instead, you should use air conditioning in both your home and car to keep pollen out.

See your allergist early in the season. A doctor can offer a number of ways to treat your allergy symptoms. Corbett said one of the best treatments is immunotherapy, which uses injections or pills to target

your specific allergy triggers and can greatly reduce the severity of your symptoms.

Allergy shots and pills can also prevent the development of [asthma](#) in some children with [seasonal allergies](#), according to Corbett.

**More information:** For more on allergies, go to the [American Academy of Family Physicians](#).

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