

Know your spring allergens and the meds that can help

April 9 2024, by Dennis Thompson



Spring is in the air, and along with it loads of tree, grass and weed pollen.

Sneezing, watery and itchy eyes, [runny nose](#) and all the other miseries of seasonal allergies can prevent a person from fully enjoying the season of rebirth.

Worse, seasonal allergies also can trigger or worsen asthma, or lead to health problems like sinus and ear infections, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

These allergies are caused by chemicals released by the immune system in reaction to a substance it has deemed an invader.

These chemicals, called histamines, are responsible for all the symptoms of seasonal allergies.

Seasonal allergens vary as spring progresses. Tree pollen is thick in early spring, grass pollen in late spring and early summer, and weed pollen in late summer and fall. Certain molds also can cause [seasonal allergies](#).

People can take some measures to avoid pollen and mold exposure, the FDA says. These include:

- Closing windows at home and in the car
- Showering before bed to remove allergens from the skin
- Remaining indoors when symptoms are severe

However, folks have to live their lives, so these measures can only go so far.

A person's doctor might recommend prescription or over-the-counter medications to relieve allergy symptoms, the FDA says.

- Antihistamines reduce or block symptoms caused by histamines, the FDA says. However, these drugs can cause drowsiness. Ask a

doctor about antihistamines that don't cause this side effect.

- Nasal corticosteroids reduce allergy symptoms by treating inflammation and [nasal congestion](#). They are typically sprayed into the nose once or twice a day, but can cause growth affects in some children with [long-term use](#). Talk to a pediatrician if a child needs to use these sprays more than two months out of the year.
- Decongestants come in pills and [nasal sprays](#). They're sometimes recommended in combination with other allergy meds, but versions containing pseudoephedrine are kept behind pharmacy counters because they can be used to make the illicit drug methamphetamine. Customers can get those versions, but they must ask the pharmacist and be prepared to show ID.
- Immunotherapy "[allergy shots](#)" can cause a person to build tolerance against a specific allergen, by receiving injections of the allergen in increasing doses. People get weekly doses for three to six months, then monthly doses for three to five years.
- Tablet immunotherapy is also available for daily use during the pollen season to dial down allergies. This prescription med is taken under the tongue. However, it isn't meant for immediate [symptom](#) relief, and should be started three to four months before allergy season.

The FDA recommends that parents always review the Drug Facts label before buying over-the-counter allergy remedies for children. Some can be used by kids as young as 2, but they might have different doses for children younger than 12.

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