

# Tips for managing your child's allergies

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(Medical Xpress) -- Allergy season can be a difficult time of year for many children and their parents. With spring in the air, pollen is close behind.

"As an allergist, spring is my busy season," says Andrew MacGinnitie, MD, PhD, associate clinical director of the Division of Immunology at Children's Hospital Boston. After an unseasonably warm winter, [parents](#) can expect [allergy season](#) to begin early."

Depending on how severe a person's allergies are, their symptoms can be as bad (or worse) than the flu. Studies show that during pollen season school attendance and performance for children with allergies suffers significantly.

Because allergies and colds share symptoms, many parents have a hard time telling the two apart. Both allergies and colds (also known as viral infections) can lead to runny noses, nasal congestion and sneezing. But the main difference between the two is that colds tend to last only for a few days, where allergy symptoms last for much longer. Allergies also tend to cause an itchiness or irritation in the eyes and nose, and colds typically do not. So if your child's sneezing and sniffing lasts for more than a week and his eyes and nose are itching he most likely has seasonal allergies and not a cold.

Dr. MacGinnitie offers a few tips to limit your child's allergy symptoms:

• Keep your windows closed and run an air conditioner, even if it's not overly warm outside. Air conditioners filter new air into a room and help minimize pollen levels inside the house. Humidifiers and non-ionic air purifiers can also help reduce pollen counts indoors and make breathing easier for kids with allergies.

• Children who are sensitive to pollen should shower and change clothes after playing outside. This extra step keeps pollen that may get

stuck in their hair or clothes from getting into the inside air or on their pillow where it can irritate the child all night long. Pollen counts are also lowest during or right after it rains, making that an ideal time for outdoor play for young children with allergies.

• Vacuum your carpets, and wash your child's linens weekly. Pollen can easily hide within the fibers and because the child is likely to have them close to her face they can trigger allergies if not properly clean. Also, dust mites, a common cause of year round allergies, can live in linens and toys.

• Wash your pets often, especially if they spend time both inside and outside. Some people are allergic to pet hair, but some are simply allergic to the pollen that collects on their fur. By keeping your animals pollen free you may be able to reduce your family's pollen exposure

• Clean any mold in the house with a diluted bleach solution. Like [pollen](#), mold is a prime [allergy](#) trigger. Using a dehumidifier in damp basements or bathrooms can inhibit mold growth.

Provided by Children's Hospital Boston

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