

# Seasonal Allergies

3/1/2017

## Weather

In many areas of the US, spring allergies begin in February and last until the early summer. Mild winter weather can cause plants to pollinate early. A rainy spring can also promote rapid plant growth and lead to an increase in mold, causing symptoms of an allergy. Therefore, it is difficult to define an “allergy season”. Tree, grass and ragweed pollens thrive during cool nights and warm days. Mold grows quickly in heat and high humidity.

*The most common fall allergen is **ragweed**, a plant that grows wild almost everywhere, but especially on the East Coast. Ragweed blooms and releases pollen from August to November. In many areas of the country, ragweed pollen levels are highest in mid-September.*

Rainy days bring relief, but pollen count can drastically increase after rainfall. On calm days with no wind, airborne allergens are minimal. Therefore, on a windy and warm dry day, pollen counts surge.



Moving to another climate to avoid allergies is usually not successful — allergens are virtually everywhere.

## Allergy Facts



- Odds that a child with one allergic parent will develop allergies: 33%, with two allergic parents: 70%.
- Number of people in the U.S. who have either allergy or asthma symptoms: one in five.
- Percentage of the U.S. population that tests positive to one or more allergens: 55%.
- One estimate of the annual cost of allergies to the health care system and businesses in the U.S.: \$7.9 billion.
- Number of workdays lost each year because of hay fever: 4 million.

Reviewed by  
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## Seasonally Related Triggers

“Seasonal allergies” generally refer to grass, pollen and mold, but there is a different group of allergy triggers that are closely related to particular seasons. Among them:

- Chlorine in indoor and outdoor swimming pools
- Candy ingredients (Halloween, Christmas, Valentine’s Day, Easter)
- Pine trees and wreaths (Thanksgiving to Christmas)
- Smoke (campfires in summer, fireplaces in winter)
- Insect bites and stings (usually in spring and summer)



## Treatment

Your doctor may recommend one or more medications to control symptoms. Some of the most widely recommended drugs are available without a prescription (over the counter); others, including some nose drops, require a prescription.

One of the most effective ways to treat seasonal allergies to pollen is immunotherapy (allergy shots). These injections expose you over time to gradual increments of your allergen, so you learn to tolerate it rather than reacting to it.



## Prevention of Allergies

- *Avoid the triggers.*
- *Keep windows and doors shut at home and in your car during the allergy season.*
- *Take a shower after spending time outside.*
- *Wear a mask while mowing your lawn or doing other chores outside.*
- *Check pollen count in spring and summer: levels are higher in the evening during tree and grass pollen season and early fall: levels are higher in the morning during ragweed season.*

### References:

American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (2014).  
Seasonal Allergy. <http://acaai.org/allergies/seasonal-allergies>  
WebMD. Allergy Statistics and Facts (2017).  
<http://www.webmd.com/allergies/allergy-statistics>