



# Tips for Dealing with Outdoor Allergens

## COMMUNITY PEDIATRIC ASTHMA SERVICE

Why do allergies act up in the summertime? Many people suffer from airborne pollen and mold spore allergens. These allergens can cause symptoms which include multiple sneezing, congestion, runny nose and itchiness in the nose, roof of the mouth, throat, eyes and ears, also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis or hay fever.

If you think you suffer from seasonal allergy symptoms, talk to your doctor about allergy testing. The results of allergy testing will help you decide which recommendations to follow.



Here is a description of the most common allergens:

- ✚ Wind pollinated plants emit small pollens which trigger allergic responses. Insect-pollinated plants from flower producers do not usually cause a problem.
- ✚ Molds are microscopic fungi which float in the air and are affected by wind, rain, snow and temperature changes.
- ✚ Pollens and mold spores are released at different times throughout the year.
- ✚ It may be useful to check when your triggers peak in the high season and make changes in your outdoor activities to decrease these symptoms.
- ✚ Pollen sources are broken down into different trees, grass, weeds and prevalent mold spores:
  - Tree pollens are high at the beginning of the season from mid-March until the beginning of June.
  - Grass pollens peak from June to the beginning of August. Weeds are high in the fall period.
  - Mold spores are high at the beginning of spring when the ground is nearly bare and also in the late summer and fall (harvest time).

There are many variables when considering pollen counts in your area. Your own sensitivity level to a specific trigger, as well as the intensity of the exposure and the number of allergens you are exposed to, will affect the magnitude of your symptoms.

The weather in your area can greatly influence pollen and mold counts.

- ✚ Windy, hot and dry days increase both of these counts.
- ✚ Rainy and cloudy days cause decreased counts by washing the pollen out of the air.
- ✚ Peak pollen and spore counts vary from year to year depending on many factors including the weather of the current and previous year.



To help reduce your symptoms during allergy season, we recommend that you:

- ✚ postpone outdoor activities until later in the morning. Pollens are usually emitted between the hours from 5 - 10am.
  - ✚ keep windows closed at night to avoid pollens or molds from entering your home. If possible, use air conditioning instead. Remember to clean your air conditioning filter regularly. This strategy also helps when travelling in a car.
  - ✚ stay indoors on hot, dry and windy days, if you are suffering from hay fever.
  - ✚ do not hang your laundry or sheets outside to dry. Allergens will gather on them.
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- ✚ ask someone to mow your lawn and rake your leaves since these activities stir up pollens and molds. A tight-fitting mask may help filter out some pollens. Keep the lawn cut to discourage grass from pollinating, that is "going to seed".
  - ✚ have a shower at the end of the day, when the pollen counts are high. This will help keep the pollen off your sheets and pillows.
  - ✚ consult with your doctor about nasal corticosteroid sprays by prescription and over the counter allergy medications (antihistamines) which may improve your allergy symptoms during peak periods.
  - ✚ try using a saline rinse for your nasal passages.

For more information about allergens and other related topics go to the [American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology website](http://www.aaaai.org).

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