

Surviving Spring Allergies

If springtime makes you sniffily and sneezy, you may have seasonal allergies. Stock up on tissues and read our “Ten Tips for Surviving Spring Allergies.”

1. Know your enemies

Pay attention to what makes you sneeze, wheeze, and sniffle. Do your eyes start to itch every time you walk by a sycamore tree? How about when you visit a friend who has a baby kitten? Springtime allergy symptoms are generally triggered by tree and flower pollens. But people with allergies are often sensitive to a number of substances, including pet dander.

2. Avoid your enemies

Once you know which things are making you teary-eyed and miserable, try to avoid them.

3. Know the facts

You may be allergic to pets, not pollens. Unfortunately, no breed of dog or cat is allergen-free. Allergic symptoms in people are triggered by pet dander (dead skin flakes mixed with pet saliva). As your pet runs, climbs, or scratches, it sheds skin flakes and dried saliva particles. Even if your pet does not shed very much, it still produces dander. How about a fish?

4. Nice sunny day, but...

Who doesn't enjoy a fresh breeze on a sunny afternoon, especially if the day before was rainy and miserable? Folks with pollen allergies, that's who! Pollens love a good soaking, and they really start to bloom after the rain. Fast forward to a breezy sunny day, and these pollens take wing, blowing everywhere. If pollen counts are high, plan your activities for later in the day when counts may be lower. For a daily pollen report, check the weather channel on TV or www.weather.com. If you must go outside, wear sunglasses to keep the pollen out of your eyes. When you get home, shower, shampoo, and change your clothes. Rinse your nostrils with water, and gargle.

5. Make your home healthier

Do you feel great when you leave your house, and then start to get stuffy when you come back? Inspect your home for sources of allergens. Rugs, lots of books, drapes, and stuffed furniture attract dust. Consider discarding the rug as well as some books, replacing your drapes with washable curtains, and keeping your house clean. In the bedrooms, try to reduce the number stuffed animals, carpets, and other dust collectors. Consider using allergen barrier covers on your pillows, mattresses, and box springs. If you use a humidifier, beware that it can harbor mold and bacteria, which can trigger allergy symptoms.

6. Shoo the shoes

Leave your shoes at the door. When you're walking outdoors, you're treading through pollens, pesticides, lead dust, and all manner of things. Wipe your feet, use a mat, and leave shoes at the door if at all possible. This will also help keep your home cleaner!

7. Drink eight glasses of water a day

Drinking eight glasses (8 oz. each) of water every day will make your mucous thinner, which in turn will help your breathing and make your cough more productive. And it's a good health habit.

8. Wet your lawn before you mow it

Dampening your lawn before you mow it will reduce the amount of pollen you're exposed to. Unfortunately, a wet lawn is harder to mow, but you'll have to weigh your options!

9. Ahem

Do you clear your throat a lot, and does it feel scratchy? This is probably because of an allergy. You don't have to sneeze and have watery eyes to have allergy symptoms.

10. One more thing...

If you think you may have allergies, talk to your doctor or nurse. You may even need to see an allergist. Remember, you don't need to live in misery. There are good medicines available to treat seasonal allergies. To learn more about allergy symptoms and treatment, visit the [American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology](#) website.

Source: Cambridge Public Health Department