

Root out seasonal allergies

You're sneezing and coughing.

And your eyes are watery, red, and itchy. Then there's that runny, stuffy nose. Maybe you remember having the same miserable symptoms last year when the seasons changed.

If you sneeze and sniffle whether or not you're sick, you could be one of the 50 million Americans with allergies.

Seasonal allergies occur when your immune system incorrectly identifies foreign substances like pollen, grass, or mold as harmful and produces antibodies to try to fight off these substances. This immune response can cause your skin, sinuses, and respiratory and digestive systems to become inflamed—which leads to watery eyes, a runny nose, and a scratchy throat, among other symptoms.

Seasonal allergies refer to symptoms that are only experienced during certain times of the year.

"The most common seasonal allergy triggers are grass, pollen, and mold," says Kettering Physician Network certified nurse practitioner Pam Kraft, APRN-CNP. "Fall triggers include ragweed and mold."

What's causing
your symptoms
and how to
feel better

Who's affected

"Anyone can get allergies at any time," says Pam. "However, if one or both of your parents suffer from allergies, you have a much greater chance of suffering from them as well."

"One common misconception is that someone is born with allergies," says Kettering Physician Network primary care physician Jolinda Caswell, MD. "However, many people actually develop seasonal allergies as they get older. A minority of people can grow out of their allergy symptoms, but symptoms are correlated to the allergen count, and it's more likely that their symptoms have subsided or lessened because the allergen count is lower."

COLD OR ALLERGY?

Unlike the common cold, symptoms of seasonal allergies occur only during certain times of the year. Allergy symptoms include:

- Runny or stuffy nose
- Watery, red, or swollen eyes
- Sneezing
- Scratchy throat
- Itchy eyes, nose, or roof of mouth

Control your triggers

There are steps you can take to minimize your seasonal allergy symptoms.

• KEEP WINDOWS AND DOORS CLOSED.

As tempting as it can be to open the windows and enjoy the fresh air, that breeze can carry allergens into your home. Keep your windows and doors closed to limit your exposure.

- **DO SOME CLEANING.** If dust is a trigger, try dusting, vacuuming, and regularly washing your bedding to cut down on the number of dust mites in your home.

- **KEEP A DIARY.** Write down when you experience symptoms and what you were doing before or during that time. This can help you identify your triggers so you can avoid these allergens in the future.

Seek relief

If seasonal allergy symptoms are interfering with your daily life, you should see your primary care provider to discuss treatment options.

"If your symptoms are mild, you should avoid your triggers as much as possible and try saline rinses," says Pam.

"Most of the time, your primary care provider can provide symptomatic relief to help you get through the season," says Dr. Caswell. "However, if your symptoms are persistent and severe, allergy testing may be in order."

It is important to discuss all allergy symptoms with your doctor. Your primary care provider will work with you to develop the best treatment plan to allow you to fully enjoy the spring season.

SHOO THE 'ACHOO

Need a checkup or help for your allergies? Find a primary care provider by calling **1-888-726-2372**.