

Seasonal Allergy.



For some people, spring means outdoor activities, flower buds, gentle breeze and blooming trees, but for others who have springtime allergies, spring means sneezing, congestion, and runny nose . The reasons behind such symptoms are trees, grass and weed pollen, dust not to mention mold spores.

Spring allergy is also known as hay fever, seasonal allergic rhinitis and nasal allergy. Thus, Allergy is an acquired, abnormal immune system response to a substance that can cause a broad range of inflammatory reactions.

Nasal allergies occur during exposure to an allergen(pollens, buds, dust), and nasal cavity becomes irritated and inflamed. So, the body recognises them as foreign bodies which cause the activation of the immune system to release antibodies (IgE) . This is responsible for releasing chemicals like histamine that cause these symptoms.

Symptoms may vary from one person to another depending on body response. These symptoms include: sneezing, runny or stuffy nose, coughing, postnasal drip, itchy nose and throat, dark circles under the eyes, and swollen, watery and itchy eyes.



It's important to note that allergies are not contagious, unlike cold and flu. So, having a high temperature or an achy body, it could be flu or cold rather than allergy. Following are the major differences between allergy and flu / cold :

	Allergies	Flu/Cold
Symptoms	Causes runny nose (clear discharge), stuffed nose, violent sneezing, wheezing, coughing, watery and itchy eyes.	Includes runny nose (yellow discharge), aches and pains, sore and scratchy throat along with sneezing and coughing.
Fever	no fever	having a fever it is almost certainly a flu/cold
Time of occurrence	Anytime of the year	Usually in winter.
Appearance of symptoms	Symptoms begin almost immediately after exposure to allergens.	Usually takes a few days
Duration	Symptoms last a long time, as long you are exposed to the allergen.	Flu/cold symptoms should clear up within a few days to a week. Rarely lasts more than 10 days.

✓ **Treatment options can help you control symptoms, following are some drugs:**

1. Oral antihistamines: These drugs counteract the action of histamine, a substance that is responsible for allergic symptoms. Such drugs include sedating and non-sedating antihistamines. Sedating ones cause drowsiness, so don't take the drug when you have to drive, operate machinery, or engage in other activities that require you to be alert.
2. Nasal corticosteroids: these are typically sprayed or inhaled into the nose once or twice a day. Side effects may include stinging in the nose. But contrary to oral corticosteroids, nasal ones don't cause the side effects of corticosteroids.
3. Decongestants: Decongestants are available both by prescription and over-the-counter. These drugs come in oral and nasal spray forms, and are sometimes recommended in combination with antihistamines. Note that prolonged use of nose sprays and drops (more than 3-5 days) can result in even worse nasal congestion.
4. Nasal irrigation: to alleviate nasal allergy symptoms, the doctor may recommend nasal irrigation (nasal lavage), it is a regular flushing out the sinuses with a warm water and salt (saline) solution may help loosen and wash out mucus and hydrates the nasal lining.

5. Allergen immunotherapy (also known as desensitization or allergy shots) : this treatment may be right if medications don't control allergy symptoms or they cause significant side effects. This treatment should be taken under doctor's supervision.



Immunotherapy is needed in the following situations:

- When symptoms are severe
- When the allergen cannot be avoided
- When the drugs usually used to treat allergic rhinitis or conjunctivitis cannot control symptoms
- If asthma develops

Allergen immunotherapy should start after the pollen season to prepare for the next season. Immunotherapy has more side effects when starting during pollen season because the allergens would have stimulated the immune system. Immunotherapy is most effective when continued year-round.

✓ **At the end to alleviate your symptoms, here are some tips:**

1. Avoid being in the garden on hot, dry days and very windy days.
2. Keep the windows closed & air condition on.
3. When cleaning a carpet, make someone else vacuums it.
4. Keep pets outside, if they need to be indoor, don't let them sleep in your bed or coach, and bath them regularly.
5. Wash your hair every day to rinse off dust and pollen.
6. Avoid outdoor activity in the early morning when pollen counts are highest.