

Season Allergies Nothing to Sneeze At *by Angela Felix, D.O.*

Seasonal allergies are common and typically occur in the fall and spring. Symptoms include runny nose, itchy watery eyes, non-productive cough, sore throat, headache, sinus congestion and ear pressure/pain. A flare of allergy symptoms often times feels like a cold that just won't go away.

Allergy symptoms are your body's response to an allergen (something in your environment that you're allergic to). Your body tries to get rid of this allergen and does so by increasing nasal secretions which leads to the symptoms named above. This makes the sufferer miserable but is the body's natural defense mechanism to get rid of the allergen.

There are many treatments for seasonal allergies. The first line treatment is an intranasal steroid like fluticasone (Flonase) or mometasone furoate monohydrate (Nasonex). After a few weeks of use, when your body is exposed to an allergen, your body doesn't respond to the allergen and therefore the amount of nasal secretions decrease. Antihistamines are also very effective in drying up nasal secretions which decrease allergic symptoms. Examples of antihistamines are loratidine (Claritin), cetirizine (Zyrtec), and fexofenadine (Allegra). Another effective way to help treat allergy symptoms is nasal irrigation. This is done most effectively by using the Netti Pot or Neil Med Sinus Rinse (these can be purchased at any pharmacy

and are \$10-\$15). Through this method, salt water is used to clean out the nasal passages which helps remove the excess nasal secretions and also rids your nasal passages of allergens. It will feel awkward using nasal irrigation at first and the process will take some getting used to, but it will be well worth it in the end.

Untreated seasonal allergies can lead to missed work and activities. Make sure to talk to your doctor about a treatment plan to avoid suffering from seasonal allergies.

Most common environmental allergens

- Pollen
- Dust
- Insect stings
- Animal dander
 - Mold
 - Latex

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