



# UNDERSTAND My Allergies

Understand why allergies happen, the differences between indoor and outdoor allergy triggers, and how you can discover what is triggering your allergy reactions.

## What is an allergy?

An allergy is a condition in which the body's immune system overreacts to normally harmless substances like dust, pollen, and pet dander. The substances that trigger allergic reactions are called *allergens*. When faced with an allergen, your body releases a chemical called *histamine*, causing these common symptoms: • Sneezing • Runny nose • Itchy, watery eyes • Itchy throat or nose

### Indoor Allergens

also known as perennial allergic rhinitis, may occur year-round. *The most common indoor triggers are:*



Dust mite matter on bedding, upholstered furniture, and carpets



Pet dander in saliva that sticks to the fur when your pet cleans itself



Mold and mildew on damp indoor surfaces, such as a musty basement

### Outdoor Allergens

also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis or hay fever, usually occur in the spring or late-summer months.

*The most common outdoor triggers are:*



**Weed and grass pollen:** Usually at their peak in the summer. Levels are highest between 5 am and 10 am



**Tree pollen:** Usually at their peak during the blooming season in early spring. Levels are highest in the morning

## Do you know your triggers?

If you know your allergy triggers, you can take steps to reduce your exposure to them. Check your answers to the following questions.

### 1. What time of year do my allergies occur?

- Year-round (could be an indoor trigger)
- Seasonally (could be an outdoor allergen)
- Year-round, but more severe seasonally (could be both indoor and outdoor triggers)

### 2. What time of day do my allergies occur?

- \_\_\_\_\_ AM      \_\_\_\_\_ PM
- Upon awakening (could be an indoor trigger in the bedroom)
  - Morning (could be an outdoor trigger, when levels are highest)
  - Afternoon
  - Evening

### 3. What symptoms do I experience?

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Itchy, watery eyes
- Itchy throat or nose

### 4. Where do my symptoms occur?

- Inside
- Outside
- Both
- Other (ie, work, the car)

List here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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