Understanding allergy symptoms and what may cause them

Do you find you have itchy, watery eyes, or find yourself sneezing all the time? Your body may be reacting to an allergen, like pollen or pet dander. You may be wondering why you have an allergic reaction and why your body responds the way it does. When you understand what causes your allergy symptoms, you can seek out the best way to find relief.

What is an allergy?
An allergy is a condition where your body’s defenses overreact to a substance that is normally harmless, such as allergens like pollen or mold. When you are exposed to an allergen, your body feels it should defend itself and begins to do so. Your body releases histamine and those awful allergy symptoms start—like sneezing, runny nose, itchy, watery eyes, and itchy nose or throat.

Do I have allergies?

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You may have allergies if you experience some or all of these symptoms.

Eyes
- Rubbing your eyes because they are itchy
- Eyes watering along with itching
- Mild redness after rubbing eyes

Nose
- Rubbing your nose because it’s itchy
- Sneezing consistently
- Runny nose with a thin, clear liquid
- Hard to breathe through your nose because it’s stuffy

Throat/Mouth
- Itchiness in your throat or roof of your mouth

Here is what’s inside:

Understanding your symptoms and what may cause them – learn how they occur, what causes the symptoms, and the differences between outdoor and indoor allergens

Managing your environment – see how simple changes can make a difference in how you feel

Treating your symptoms – discover the various medicines available for your specific symptoms

Talking to a healthcare specialist – determine what may be your best course of action for relief

You may have outdoor or indoor allergies.
Learn more about allergies with the ZYRTEC® MY ALLERGY GUIDE™.

Do you sneeze in the springtime?
Or do you find yourself with itchy, watery eyes throughout the year?
If you find yourself sneezing more often during the spring or fall, you might be suffering from outdoor allergies (sometimes called “hay fever”).

Outdoor allergens

If you find yourself sneezing more often during the spring or fall, you might be suffering from outdoor allergies (sometimes called “hay fever”).

1. **Weed and grass pollen**
   - Common allergen-producing weed pollens include ragweed and Russian thistle. Grass pollen is regional as well as seasonal; examples include Bermuda grass, Kentucky bluegrass, and Timothy grass.

2. **Tree pollen**
   - Tree pollens that frequently cause allergic reactions are elm, oak, sycamore, hickory, walnut, pecan, birch, and cedar.

If you have indoor allergies, you probably have symptoms all year long. Some of the most common indoor allergens are:

Indoor allergens

- **Dust mites**
  - These tiny objects really can’t be seen, but usually lodge themselves in bedding, upholstered furniture, and carpets.

- **Pet dander**
  - Most likely, it’s not your pet’s fur you may be allergic to; it’s a substance found in pet saliva that sticks to the fur when a pet cleans itself.

- **Mold and mildew**
  - Mold spores travel through the air and grow indoors once they land on wet surfaces like the bathtub or shower.

Are there different types of allergies?

Yes! There are two types of allergies: perennial (indoor) and seasonal (outdoor) allergies.

If you suffer from allergies throughout the year, you could have indoor allergies. If you suffer from allergies at certain times of the year, such as spring or fall, you may be suffering from outdoor allergies. It is also possible to be sensitive to both indoor and outdoor allergens.
Intranasal corticosteroids:
Treat and may prevent swelling of the nasal passages. They relieve nasal congestion, sneezing, runny nose, and itchy nose.

Immunotherapy (allergy shots):
A series of injections given by a healthcare provider over several years. Each contains a small amount of allergens to provoke an antibody response, reduce your sensitivity, and increase your tolerance of allergens.

Some medicines are available over-the-counter and others need a prescription. Be sure to read the labels and use products only as directed.

Do I know what I am allergic to?

Sometimes it’s hard to tell. Talking to an allergist or other healthcare provider can help you determine what types of allergens trigger your allergy symptoms.

Ask yourself the following questions:
When do my allergies occur?
If they occur only during certain seasons of the year, you could be allergic to something outdoors, like pollen. Allergies that occur more regularly throughout the year may indicate an indoor allergy, such as dust mites.

What time of day do my symptoms start?
If you find they often occur right when you wake up, you might be sensitive to an indoor allergen, such as dust mites or pet dander that can be found in bedding or carpets.
If you find your symptoms start when you walk outside, you could be suffering from outdoor allergies, such as pollen—which is at its worst between 10 AM and 5 PM.

Where am I when my symptoms take place?
Are you at home? At work? Exercising outside? Location may provide the clues you need to determine what you’re reacting to. Remember, pollen can also travel through the house via windows, on clothing, and on pets, so even though you might think you are allergic to something indoors, it still could be pollen!
Do you need to see an allergist?

Your primary healthcare provider may suggest you also see an allergist to determine the cause of your allergies.

If you see an allergist, here’s what you can expect:

• **Allergy strategy**
  Before your appointment, pinpoint when your allergies occur so you can share this information with your doctor and work out a strategy.

• **Skin testing**
  A doctor or nurse places a drop of each potential allergen on your skin and then pricks your skin, allowing the allergen to enter. Fifteen minutes later, you’ll be able to see how your skin reacts to each allergen.

• **Intradermal test**
  A small amount of each potential allergen is injected just under your skin. Fifteen minutes later, a doctor or nurse will take a look at your skin’s reaction.

• **Patch test**
  An allergen is applied to a patch and then placed on your skin. After 48 hours, you’ll go back to your doctor to see which allergens have affected you the most.

• **Allergy Blood Test (specific IgE or RAST)**
  A blood sample is taken to check for specific IgE (immunoglobulin E) antibodies to help your doctor determine what allergens are responsible for your allergy symptoms.

You can find great allergy management resources at Zyrtec.com

• **ZYRTEC® ALLERGYCAST®** app – a free app that’s downloadable right from your mobile phone
  — Get pollen counts and extended weather forecasts to help plan your day
  — Log your allergy symptoms and track how you’re feeling
  — Go to Zyrtec.com to download via iTunes®

• **ZYRTEC® REWARDS**
  — Earn great rewards for being a loyal member of the ZYRTEC® Rewards program. You’ll get savings on ZYRTEC® products and as soon as you register, you’ll start earning points, which you can redeem for all sorts of cool stuff

• **Learn which ZYRTEC® product may be right for you at Zyrtec.com**

*Available for iPhone® and Android™.
†Standard rates for your plan apply. The information contained in the allergy forecast is provided by third parties for information purposes only; and does not represent a guarantee of accuracy or an endorsement, direct or implied, by McNeil Consumer Healthcare Division of McNEIL-PPC, Inc. iTunes is a registered trademark of Apple Inc.
Still have questions? Your doctor can help.

Here is a list of questions to ask yourself prior to seeing your doctor. Bring the answers to your healthcare provider during your consultation to help better understand your individual allergy symptoms and how they affect you.

I typically experience…
- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Itchy, watery eyes
- Itchy nose or throat
- Nasal or sinus congestion

My symptoms typically occur…
- All year long
- Only during certain times of the year (for instance, spring or fall)
- All year long, but I feel worse during certain times of the year

The time of day my symptoms usually occur is…
- When I first wake up (which could be an indoor allergy)
- As soon as I go outside (which could be an outdoor allergy)

I tend to experience symptoms… (check all that apply)
- In my house
- Outside
- Other (please list)
- At work/school
- In the car
- When I’m around pets (cats or dogs)

The medication(s) I have used to treat my allergies over the past year are:
(List all prescription and over-the-counter medications you have tried)

I currently take this medication(s) to treat my allergies:
(List all prescription and over-the-counter medications you currently take)

What else should I discuss?
- How often I experience symptoms
- The severity of my symptoms (for instance, are they relatively mild, moderate, or severe)
- What medications are right for my particular allergy symptoms
When you’re inside…

- **Filter your air.** HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filters can be used in air conditioners and vacuums to trap small allergen particles.

- **Reduce dust mites.** Use hypoallergenic bedding with zippered, allergen-proof covers and wash all sheets and blankets in hot water each week.

- **Prevent mold.** Since mold thrives on wet surfaces, try to keep your home as dry as possible. Wipe down shower doors and bathroom fixtures to prevent mold from forming.

- **Manage children’s exposure to allergens.** Wash all stuffed toys to reduce dust.

- **Keep pets off the furniture.** Upholstered furniture may harbor pet dander. Washing pets often can help, too!
Allergy medicines may help you feel better, too

There are several different medications available for relief of allergy symptoms. Talk to your doctor about which therapy may be right for you.

**Antihistamines:** Treat a wide range of allergy symptoms: sneezing, runny nose, watery, itchy eyes, and itchy nose or throat. Antihistamines work by blocking histamine (a chemical the body releases that causes your allergy symptoms), and come in pill, liquid, and orally dissolving tablets.

**Decongestants:** Shrink swollen tissue in the nose to relieve nasal and sinus congestion. Decongestants come in pill and nasal spray form and are often combined with an antihistamine. Some are only available behind-the-counter—just ask your pharmacist.

**Antihistamine eye drops:** Temporarily relieve itchy eyes due to pollen, ragweed, grass, animal hair, and pet dander. Some eye drops also reduce redness.

Are you sure your symptoms are due to allergies rather than a cold?

The symptoms are very similar and can be confusing. Visit Zyrtec.com to get information to help distinguish between the two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALLERGY</th>
<th>COLD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symptoms can develop immediately after exposure to your allergy triggers.</td>
<td>Symptoms develop slowly and are milder.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>May include:</strong></td>
<td><strong>May include:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Clear, watery, runny nose</td>
<td>• Runny nose that starts clear &amp; becomes thick and colored</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Symptoms can last more than 2 weeks or be recurrent</td>
<td>• Lasts 7-10 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Itchy nose</td>
<td>• Could have a mild fever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Itchy, watery eyes and itchy throat</td>
<td>• Sore throat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Symptoms can appear at the start of the seasons (like spring)</td>
<td>• Mild discomfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Some symptoms, like sneezing, are common in both allergies and colds.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How can I manage my allergy symptoms?

While you sometimes may feel like you just can’t escape your allergy symptoms, making small changes to how you live and your surroundings may make a big difference.

When you’re outside…

- **Find your comfort zone.** Know your limits when outside—especially on high-pollen days. It’s a good idea to know the pollen count every day, so you can plan ahead.

- **Keep outdoor allergens out.** On high-pollen days, keep your doors and windows closed and use air conditioning when possible. Shower and change your clothes after you’ve been outside.

- **Keep off the grass!** If possible, take the sidewalk to reduce contact with pollen and mold spores from grass and weeds.

- **Don’t hang clothes outside.** Pollen can attach to your clothes!

- **Be travel-smart.** Consider taking a vacation to a spot where the pollen level is low (like the beach).
Additional resources

These organizations and websites can also provide you with more information about allergies.

- **American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI)**
  www.aaaai.org

- **American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (ACAAI)**
  www.allergyandasthmarelief.org

- **Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA)**
  www.aafa.org

- **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)**
  www.aap.org

  **Also...**
  www.healthychildren.org

- **Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics (AANMA)**
  www.aanma.org

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