

*Have a Happy and Healthy summer.
Health Bytes will resume on August 28th.*

8 Answers to Common Allergy Questions

What can I do to treat my allergy symptoms?

Lots of things. Sometimes you can't avoid allergens because soccer games and playgrounds aren't going to play themselves. When you can't avoid allergens, there are a ton of medicines that can help control your allergy symptoms. Decongestants and antihistamines are the most common allergy medications. They help to reduce a stuffy nose, runny nose, sneezing and itching. Other medications work by preventing the release of the chemicals that cause allergic reactions. Talk to your doctor about which treatments may be right for you.

Can weather affect my allergies?

Yes. April showers bring May flowers and dander and pollen and other stuff we call allergens. A rainy spring can speed plant growth and lead to an increase in mold, which can make allergy symptoms last well into the fall. Mold also grows quickly in heat and high humidity. Rain may wash pollen away, but pollen counts can soar after rainfall. Tree, grass and ragweed pollens thrive during cool nights and warm days. So it's important to know your triggers. Stay inside midday and during the afternoon, when pollen counts are highest, and avoid spending time outside on hot, humid or windy days. Keep windows and doors closed to avoid exposure to mold and pollen. And talk to your doctor about the right allergy meds for you.

What does a pollen count mean and how does it affect my allergies?

Like your best friend, the pollen count tells you the news, even if it isn't the good kind.

It measures how many grains of plant pollen are in the air during a set period of time. It is measured for different types of plants. Pollen counts can change daily with the weather. Check pollen counts often, especially if you plan to spend time outdoors. See the weather section of your local newspaper or visit a weather information web site to find pollen counts in your area. Talk to your doctor about how pollen count information may help you adjust the dose of your medicine.

Does air conditioning affect my allergy symptoms?

Yes, it does. Air conditioning not only plays a huge part in the amount of complaining you do in the summer, it also can affect your allergies. Dust mites and mold thrive in humid environments. So reducing humidity with air conditioning can help reduce some symptoms. Air conditioners also help to prevent exposure of outdoor allergens, because when windows and doors remain closed, you can reduce the number of outdoor allergens from entering the home. So make sure you improve the air quality indoors and clean or replace filters on your air conditioner every two to three months.

Does rubbing my itchy eyes from allergies do any harm?

It may be tough, but try not to rub those itchy eyes. If you have seasonal allergic conjunctivitis—a common eye allergy—rubbing itchy eyes may make your symptoms worse and could cause infection. You can help ease symptoms by using lubricating eye drops, applying cool compresses to the eyes, or taking over-the-counter oral antihistamines.

Seasonal allergies make my eyes itch but can they also be causing these dark circles?

Yes. Turns out that binge-watching your favorite TV shows until 2 a.m. is not the only thing that will put dark circles under your eyes. Did you know that seasonal allergic conjunctivitis (SAC) is the most common eye allergy? Not only can it make your eyes itch but it can be causing those dark circles (known as allergic shiners). Talk to your doctor about ways to relieve the unpleasant symptoms of seasonal allergies.

Can I outgrow my allergies?

You sure can, just like your favorite jeans. Allergies happen when the immune system overreacts to substances that usually cause no reaction in most people. There are many types of treatments for allergies that can help relieve symptoms, both in the short and long term. Your treatment is based on allergy test results, your medical

history, and the severity of your symptoms, and can include avoidance of allergens, medication options and/or immunotherapy (allergy shots). Talk to your doctor about which treatment options may be right for you.

Does my level of stress have any effect on my allergy symptoms?

Yes. It's time to invest in bath soaps and lavender candles. While stress doesn't cause allergies, easing your mind might mean less allergy flare-ups. Recent studies have shown that allergy sufferers with persistent stress experience more allergy flares. While alleviating stress won't cure your allergies, it may help decrease episodes of intense symptoms. Try to make time for fun and relaxation, and adopt a healthy, balanced lifestyle that promotes emotional well-being.

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