



Seasonal Allergies

Standard Treatments:

- Nasal saline rinses** – Rinsing out the nose with nasal saline cleans the inside of the nose and gets rid of pollen in the nose. Do this upon waking in the morning, and after returning in from outdoors.
- Steroid nasal sprays** – These are the first line treatment for seasonal allergies, but it can take a week or two before they work. You can get some steroid nose sprays over the counter without a prescription. Examples include Flonase, Nasacort, Rhinocort and Nasonex (or their generic equivalent). Steroid nose sprays work best if you use them every day. They should be used after the nasal saline rinse. Steroid nose sprays are more effective than other allergy medicines for congestion and post-nasal drip.
- Antihistamines** – These medicines help stop itching, sneezing, and runny nose symptoms. Examples include Claritin, Allegra or Zyrtec (or their generic equivalents). Some older antihistamines such as Benadryl can make people feel tired. If you take antihistamines year-round, you may find that switching one out for another every 6 months helps to maintain effectiveness.
- Decongestants** – These medicines can reduce stuffy nose symptoms and can come in oral forms (such as pseudoephedrine or phenylephrine), or nasal spray (such as Afrin). People with certain health problems, such as high blood pressure, should not take oral decongestants. The pseudoephedrine-containing products (such as Sudafed or Claritin-D/Zyrtec-D/Allegra-D) may be the most effective, but are only available “behind the counter” so you must ask the pharmacist for them. They should only be used short term. Also, people should not use decongestant nose sprays for more than 3 days in a row as your nose will become dependent on it and your symptoms will rebound when you stop it.
- Allergy shots** – Some people with seasonal allergies choose to get allergy shots. There are two categories of what may be considered “allergy shots.” There are desensitization injections which are usually given every week or month as recommended by an allergy doctor. They contain tiny amounts of allergens, such as pollen. Many people find that this treatment reduces their symptoms, but it can take months to work. A similar product is available in pill-form for under the tongue. The second type of “allergy shot” is a steroid injection such as a kenalog shot which may also help reduce your allergy symptoms, but because they also suppress your immune system and can be associated with other serious side effects, they are not recommended unless other options have been tried and failed.
- Antihistamine eye drops** – If itchy/watery eyes are a primary symptom, antihistamine eye drops can help. These can be purchased over the counter.

Additional considerations to supplement the above standard recommendations:

- **Quercetin** – This is an antioxidant and acts as a mast cell stabilizer to prevent histamine from being released in the first place, which in-turn can prevent your symptoms from coming on.
- **DAO or Diamine Oxidase** – helps break down histamine in the gut. This is more beneficial in food allergies and sensitivities than respiratory pollen allergies, but does help lower your total histamine burden which may help with symptoms if you have multiple allergens contributing to your symptom.

Can seasonal allergy symptoms be prevented?

Yes. If you get symptoms at the same time every year, you may be able to prevent symptoms by starting nasal steroids and antihistamines a couple weeks before that time of the year. You can also help prevent symptoms by avoiding the things you are allergic to. For example, people who are allergic to pollen can:

- Stay inside during the times of the year when they have symptoms
- Keep car and house windows closed, and use air conditioning instead
- Take a shower before bed to rinse pollen off their hair and skin
- Wear a dust mask if they need to be outside

Always talk to your doctor about whether these treatments are right for you.

Have more questions or would like to schedule an appointment?

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