

Welcome Back, Allergies

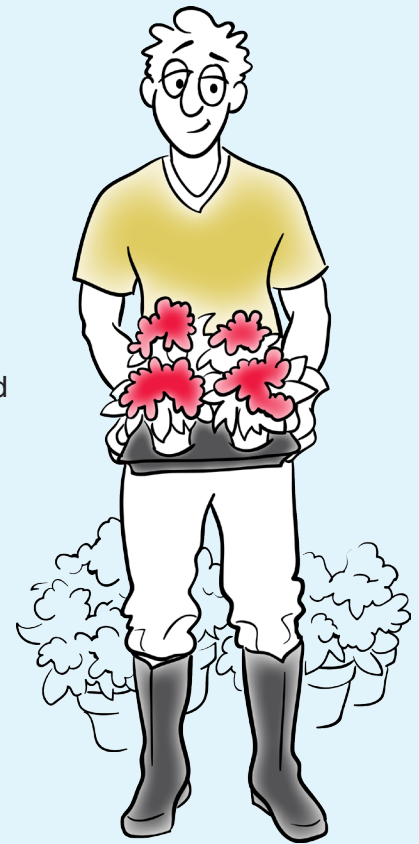
According to the Centers for Disease Control, allergies are the sixth leading cause of chronic illness in the U.S., with an annual cost in excess of \$18 billion. It is estimated that more than 50 million Americans suffer from allergies each year.

Seasonal allergies are those allergies that come with the change of seasons and usually begin in February. However, a mild winter and rainy spring (sound familiar?) promotes rapid growth of these allergens, which means they can be prevalent even sooner.

Approximately two-thirds of spring allergy sufferers actually have year-round symptoms. These include a runny nose, coughing, sneezing, and/or itchy, watery eyes (or even dark circles around them).

The most common seasonal allergy triggers include grass, pollen, and mold. Though these are triggers for symptoms, the actual cause of allergies lies within the immune system. It mistakes innocent things in the environment for a serious threat and attacks them, resulting in symptoms.

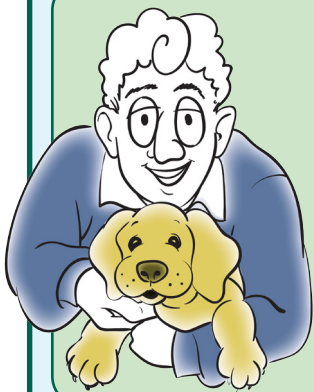
Combating the symptoms often includes an antihistamine, but knowing your triggers is important to ensure you're taking the right precautionary and reactive measures. To do so, a trip to your family doctor is a good place to start. They may refer to see an allergist who will further investigate the cause and treatment regimen for your symptoms.



Nothing To Sneeze At

Here are some general tips to combat general allergy symptoms.

- **Stay Inside!** Not indefinitely (that goes against everything we've ever said), but just at least while pollen counts are high.
- **Clean Your Hair!** An evening wash rids hair of the day's trapped pollen.
- **Relax!** Stress can amp-up your allergy response.
- **Stay Cool (and Dry)!** To ward off dust mites, keep the temperature in your home at the mid- to low 60 degrees Fahrenheit and the humidity at 40-45%.
- **Wash Your Bed Sheets!** Clean them weekly in hot water, killing allergens.
- **Groom Your Pets!** Get your furry friends groomed regularly and ban them from your bedroom to eliminate some of the dander.



SOURCES: ACAAI, WebMD, Health.com