



RETIREE RXCARE™ NEWSLETTER

ALLERGY SEASON

Spring is back. With the weather warming, the trees and flowers are in full bloom and releasing pollen into the air. For those affected by seasonal allergies, this is the peak of allergy season. Here are some tips to help with managing allergy symptoms this spring.

Allergies are caused by the body's immune system reacting to allergens such as pollen or mold in the air. The body identifies the pollen as a harmful substance and creates antibodies. These antibodies attach to mast cells, which then release histamine. The histamine is responsible for allergy symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose, congestion, and itchy, watery eyes.

One of the first steps in reducing allergies is avoiding exposure to allergens. Watch the pollen count from the local news and avoid going outside when the count is high. Try to stay indoors with windows and doors closed to minimize pollen exposure. Use an air conditioner or central air for cooling if needed. Save outdoor activities for late afternoon or after heavy rain when the pollen count tends to be lower. Finally, avoid bringing pollen in to the home. Shower and wash clothes to remove pollen stuck to the body after going outside.

There are also a few over-the-counter medications available for treating allergy symptoms. Generally, first line treatment involves the use of an antihistamine. Available non-drowsy antihistamines include Allegra (fexofenadine), Claritin (loratadine), Xyzal (levocetirizine),

and Zyrtec (cetirizine). These can be taken daily to keep symptoms at bay. Nasal symptoms are best treated with over-the-counter nasal steroid sprays such as Flonase (fluticasone), Nasacort (triamcinolone), and Rhinocort (budesonide). Non-drug treatments such as nasal saline or Neti pots may also be helpful. These products work by rinsing allergens from the nasal passages.

If allergy symptoms persist or are severe, consider visiting an allergist for immunotherapy treatment, more commonly known as allergy shots. After conducting some tests, the allergist will create a therapy tailored to a patient's specific allergy profile. Therapy usually consists of several months of weekly injections. The goal of the treatment is to improve the body's tolerance to allergens without causing allergy symptoms.

References:

1. Allergic Rhinitis: <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000813.htm>
2. Patient education: Allergic rhinitis (Beyond the Basics): https://www.uptodate.com/contents/allergic-rhinitis-beyond-the-basics?search=allergic-rhinitis-seasonal-allergies-beyond-the-basics&source=search_result&selectedTitle=1~150&usage_type=default&display_rank=1#H11
3. Wallace DV, Dykewicz MS, Oppenheimer J, Portnoy JM, Lang DM. Pharmacologic Treatment of Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis: Synopsis of Guidance From the 2017 Joint Task Force on Practice Parameters. *Ann Intern Med.* 2017;167:876–881. doi: 10.7326/M17-2203

