

RETIREE RxCARE™ NEWSLETTER

ALLERGY SEASON IS APPROACHING: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO TACKLE IT HEAD ON

WHAT ARE SPRING ALLERGIES?

Seasonal allergies, also known as hay fever and allergic rhinitis, are caused by your immune system reacting to pollen from plants. According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control, seasonal allergies are one of the most common allergic diseases despite often being under-recognized and ineffectively treated. Seasonal allergies get their name because they occur seasonally, most often in the Spring and Fall, when pollen from common trees, grasses, and weeds is spread through the air in tiny particles as the climate and vegetation transitions. The most common symptoms include sneezing, a runny nose, nasal congestion, itchy eyes, nose, ears, and throat. Though the symptoms are similar, seasonal allergies should not be confused with the common cold; they are not contagious!

WHY ARE MY EYES AND NOSE SO ITCHY?

When those who are allergic become exposed to the tiny pollen particles, their immune system reacts to them as if they are dangerous and releases antibodies to attack the allergen. This causes the release of histamines, which are chemicals in the body that help clear out the allergens as part of the inflammatory response, causing the itchiness, redness, sneezing, and other common symptoms you may be experiencing.

WHAT OVER THE COUNTER (OTC) MEDICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP RELIEVE MY SYMPTOMS?

Steroidal nasal sprays are some of the most effective medications to treat seasonal allergy symptoms. They contain strong anti-inflammatory agents that can help relieve sneezing, nasal congestion, nasal itching, and itchy eyes. As needed use has not proven to be as effective as continuous use, and it may take up to one week to experience full relief. However, make sure to read the drug label prior to use and administer the medication per the directions.

Listed below are OTC steroidal nasal sprays indicated for the temporary relief of seasonal allergies:

- Nasacort Allergy 24H
- Flonase Allergy Relief
- Flonase Sensimist Allergy Relief
- Rhinocort Allergy Spray

Antihistamine drugs are recommended for patients experiencing primary complaints of sneezing and itching. They work by blocking histamines, as the name suggests, reducing the inflammatory allergic response. If nasal congestion is your primary concern, a decongestant may be more appropriate. If you are experiencing a variety of symptoms, some drugs combine an antihistamine and decongestant. Drugs in these categories available OTC are most commonly found in the form of orally administered tablets, liquids, and eye drops.

Common Antihistamines Available OTC:

- Pataday Twice Daily Relief Ophthalmic Solution
- Pataday Once Daily Relief Ophthalmic Solution
- Xyzal Allergy 24HR Tablets/ Solution
- Allegra 24hr
- Allegra
- Zyrtec Allergy Tablets
- Zyrtec Hives Relief Tablets
- Zaditor Ophthalmic Solution
- Alaway Ophthalmic Solution
- Claritin Hives Relief Tablets/Solution
- Claritin Tablets/Solution
- Benadryl Allergy Tablets/Solution

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Common Nasal Decongestants Available OTC:

- Mucinex D ER Tablet
- Afrin Original Nasal Spray
- Dristan 12- Hour Nasal Decongestant Spray
- Vicks Sinex Severe Nasal Spray
- Vicks Sinex Severe Capsules
- Sudafed Sinus Congestion 24 Hour
- Sudafed Sinus Congestion
- Sudafed Nasal Decongestant Liquid

Common Antihistamine and Decongestant Combination Medications Available OTC:

- Zyrtec-D
- Claritin-D
- Claritin-D 24-hour
- Allegra-D
- Benadryl Allergy Plus Congestion

EXTRA STEPS YOU CAN TAKE AT HOME TO COMBAT SEASONAL ALLERGIES

The most important step you can take at home to remedy your allergies is avoidance. By limiting or avoiding your allergens, you are reducing your chances of an allergic reaction. Keep your home and car air clean by using air conditioning with clean filters, avoid opening doors and windows unnecessarily, avoid going outside early in the day when pollen counts are the highest, and stay inside on windy days. Avoid hanging laundry outside to dry, and try to delegate gardening chores to other family members who may not be susceptible to seasonal allergies.

There are also many natural remedies to supplement your immune health during allergy season. Saline nasal irrigation (Neti pot) has proven beneficial effects for those suffering from nasal congestion, as the mucous and allergens are being flushed from your nose. Practitioners of natural medicine suggest 2,000mg of Vitamin C daily to reduce histamine levels; this can be in the form of Vit. C packed produce and foods such as oranges, or supplements. Naturopaths also suggest diffusing peppermint essential oil. Despite not having any effect on congestion, the menthol in peppermint oil (also present in common OTC medications including vapor rubs and cough drops) produces a cooling sensation that mimics the feeling of clearer nasal passageways. You could even sip on peppermint tea or other herbal teas containing anti-inflammatory ingredients such as ginger or echinacea throughout the day to soothe sinus irritation. Talk to your doctor before trying any alternative treatments and be aware that some herbs may cause allergic reactions in people who are allergic to related plants.

Resources:

- <https://www.uspharmacist.com/article/allergic-rhinitis-assisting-patients-in-achieving-optimal-outcomes>
- <https://www.fda.gov/about-fda/center-drug-evaluation-and-research-cder/prescription-over-counter-otc-switch-list>
- <https://www.webmd.com/allergies/spring-allergies#1>
- <https://www.webmd.com/allergies/antihistamines-for-allergies>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/home-remedies-for-allergies#home-remedies>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/essential-oils-for-sinus-congestion>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hay-fever/in-depth/seasonal-allergies/art-20048343>



ON YOUR TEAM.

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