

Seasonal Allergies: Keeping Symptoms in Check

It's finally spring, which for many kids and adults means it's also time for seasonal allergies. According to the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI), seasonal allergies may affect up to 40 percent of children and 30 percent of adults.

Also known as allergic rhinitis or hay fever, seasonal allergy symptoms usually start when airborne pollen from trees, grass, flowers and weeds enters the eyes, nose and throat and sets off an allergic reaction.

Seasonal allergy symptoms include a stuffy or runny nose, congestion, sneezing, itchy eyes and nose, sore throat, chronic cough, dark circles under the eyes, itchy skin (sometimes hives) and stomachache.

It's important to keep in mind that allergic rhinitis is more than just a mild annoyance. Some of the consequences of seasonal allergies in children include:

- Fatigue and poor concentration in school due to lack of sleep
- An increase in ear and sinus infections
- Absence from school due to illness
- Exacerbated asthma due to uncontrolled allergies
- Disturbed sleep
- Behavioral issues

Taking aim at allergy triggers

There are a number of prescription and over-the-counter medications that can help relieve the symptoms of seasonal allergies. I have included a list of over the counter allergy medications, what allergy symptoms these medications are used for, possible side effects, and children/adult doses.

Aside from medication, there are other steps you can take to make your child more comfortable during allergy season:

- Keep windows and doors closed to avoid exposure to pollen.
- Check the forecast for pollen levels, and limit outdoor activities when pollen counts are highest. An excellent web site for this information is www.pollen.com. You can sign up for daily email alerts.
- Pollen counts are highest in the early morning and late afternoon, so you can plan your day accordingly.
- **Take any "once a day" allergy medication at night; this way the medication is circulating in your body when the pollen level is the highest.**
- Dry clothes in the dryer, not by hanging them outside so they don't get covered in pollen dust.
- Have your child take his bath (as well as shampooing your child's hair) at bedtime, which may help to wash off allergens and prevent nighttime allergy problems.
- Keep windows in your home and car closed, which can lower your child's exposure to pollen. Use air conditioning to keep your home and vehicle cool instead, but make sure it's on recirculating mode, to keep outdoor air out.
- Have family members leave their shoes at the door upon entering the house, this helps avoid tracking the pollen into your home.
- Have your child wash their hands and face with soapy water every time they return from being outside.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

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