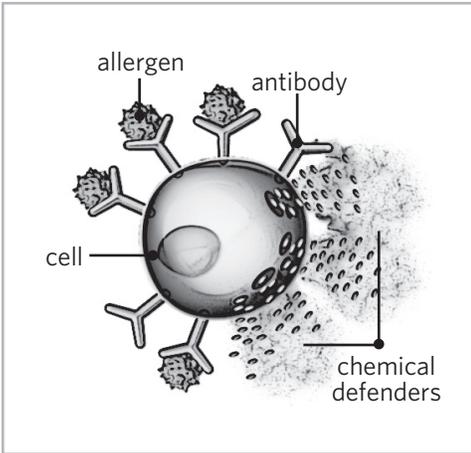


Allergies



Allergies happen when your immune system overreacts to an allergy trigger you breathe in from the air. These allergy triggers, called allergens, can be found indoors—or outdoors during specific times of the year like the spring or fall. Your immune system reacts by making antibodies to protect you from the allergen. Whenever you're exposed to the allergen in the future, the antibodies cause cells to release chemical defenders, like histamine and leukotrienes into the blood. This process ends up causing allergy symptoms.

Symptoms

Allergy symptoms can range from mild to severe. They include:

- stuffy nose
- itchy or runny nose
- itchy or watery eyes
- dark rings under swollen eyes
- coughing and sneezing
- itchy throat or mouth

If any of these sound familiar, you may have airborne allergies. Your doctor may also call it allergic rhinitis, hay fever or indoor/outdoor allergies

Allergy symptoms can be similar to the symptoms of a common cold. But there are differences:

	Cold	Allergies
Cause	virus	allergens
Fever	sometimes	no
Contagious	yes	no
Time it lasts	2-14 days	while the allergen is around and a short time after
Symptoms that differ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ yellow mucus ▪ no itchiness ▪ dull headache, muscle aches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clear mucus ▪ itchy nose, eyes, throat ▪ no aches

Know Your Triggers

The first step to improving allergy symptoms is to stay away from what causes them. To figure out what triggers your allergies, keep track of where you are and what you are doing when you notice symptoms. Triggers, or allergens, may include:

- **Pollen**—Trees, weeds, and grasses release tiny pollen particles into the air each spring, summer and fall. This allergen may end up in your nose and throat, causing allergy symptoms.
To avoid pollen: Improve air quality by keeping doors and windows closed. Use central air-conditioning, and change your filter every few months. You can also watch pollen counts. If you know when pollen counts are high, plan to limit time outside. They're highest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- **Mold**—Carried in the air year-round, mold grows in moist areas. Indoors, it can be found in damp places like bathrooms, basements and laundry rooms. Mold can also grow on fabric, stuffed animals, wallpaper, rugs and books if they are kept in a damp place. Outdoors,



To learn more, visit
**HealthyAdvice.com/
UnderstandAllergies**

You can also visit these
websites:

- **Allergy and Asthma Foundation of America**
www.aafa.org
- **American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology**
www.aaaai.org
- **Medline Plus**
www.medlineplus.gov

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mold is found in leaf piles and anywhere moisture collects.

To avoid mold: Use an exhaust fan, and clean the tub and shower weekly to limit mold. Put a dehumidifier in moist basements. Find a new home for potted plants, or spread aquarium pebbles over the dirt to help limit mold. Outside, rake wet leaves so they don't turn into moldy piles. If you're allergic, ask someone else to do the raking, or wear a face mask.

- **Dust**—Dust mites (tiny insects) are the most common cause of dust allergies. They are found in bedding, mattresses and box springs.
To avoid dust: Put allergen-proof covers on your pillows and mattresses, and wash sheets and blankets in hot water. Consider replacing fabric sofas and chairs with leather, wood, or plastic furniture since these are easier to clean. Use washable curtains and shades, and if possible, remove carpets. Vacuum weekly and use a vacuum with a HEPA filter.
- **Pets**—This trigger can include pet dander (small scales of skin the pet sheds) or saliva. An allergy to a pet's fur or feathers is rare.
To avoid pet allergens: Keep pets out of bedrooms, and wash your hands immediately after touching them.
- **Smoke**—This can include smoke from cigarettes, grills, fireplaces or campfires. Smoke can also trigger asthma flare-ups.
To avoid smoke: Don't allow smoking anywhere in your home. And avoid being around secondhand smoke and smoke from grills and campfires whenever possible.

Treatment Options

Because there is no cure for allergies, your treatment goals are to relieve and prevent symptoms, and to keep your allergies from disrupting daily activities like work or school. You and your doctor will work together to develop a treatment plan that may include:

- **Allergy medicines**—They are available over-the-counter or by prescription to help ease and prevent allergy symptoms. Remember to take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Don't stop taking any medicine without talking to your doctor first—and avoid missing doses. Tell your doctor if you have side effects so he can help you find a solution.
- **Salt-water or saline rinse**—This is an over-the-counter nasal spray to help relieve a stuffy nose.
- **Allergy shots**—This therapy helps your body get used to an allergen, so it no longer triggers symptoms.

Remember:

- Allergies happen because your body overreacts to a trigger.
- Take steps to identify your allergy triggers so you can avoid them.
- There's no cure for allergies, but medicine can help treat and prevent symptoms.