

Allergens are everywhere

Learn more about them—and how to fight back. If you are one of the 40 million Americans who have indoor and outdoor allergies, you probably know about the symptoms—itching, watery eyes, runny nose, and sneezing, just to name a few. What you may not know is what substances can trigger your nasal allergy symptoms. These triggers are called allergens. Allergens may be present year-round, or they may come and go with the seasons. Allergens are generally harmless substances, such as pollen, mold spores, animal dander, and dust mites, but to people with allergies, they can trigger bothersome allergy symptoms. Unfortunately, allergens are everywhere.^{1,2}

What triggers my nasal allergy symptoms?



Pollen is a powdery substance given off by weeds, trees, and grasses. If you are allergic to one type of pollen, you may be affected only during a certain season. For example, weeds are pollinated in late summer and fall, trees are pollinated in late winter and spring, and grasses are pollinated in late spring and summer. Pollen allergies can strike at certain times of day. Pollen is often released early in the morning, which results in high pollen counts. Even weather can impact pollen allergies. Warm, dry, breezy days create conditions that allow pollen to move around freely. In contrast, pollen counts are lowest on chilly, wet days.³



Mold grows in damp environments. Mold is a fungus that reproduces by releasing spores—seed-like objects that are carried in the air. Breathing in these spores may trigger your allergies. Mold spores can be found indoors and outdoors. Inside, mold often lurks in basements, closets, bathrooms, food storage areas, refrigerators, garbage containers, houseplants, air conditioners, and humidifiers. Outside, mold thrives in moist, shady areas, such as on rotting leaves and logs.⁴



Animal dander is the dead skin that is shed by your pet every day. Dander contains a protein that may trigger your allergies. Petting and grooming sends these allergens into the air. Dander is quite sticky and can be found on clothing, walls, and furniture. It can be found in your home even if you don't have animals. That's because it can stick to you.⁵



Dust mites are so tiny you can't see them without a microscope. They look like small white bugs, and they eat the tiny flakes of skin you shed each day. These flakes are everywhere: in your furniture, bedding, carpets, and even your child's stuffed toys.⁶

Learn how to avoid allergens. ▶

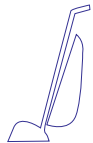
See over for important tips.

Take action against your indoor and outdoor allergies²

Nasal allergies can be bothersome at times. It's nearly impossible to eliminate every allergen from your home. However, you can take steps to make it a more friendly environment, even during allergy season.

How can I avoid allergens?²

- **Keep windows closed and run the air conditioner** to reduce the effects of seasonal allergies
- **Use an air filter** to help clean pollen, mold, animal dander, and dust mites out of the air in your home
- **Replace carpets with wood, tile, or vinyl floors**, and mop your floors often
- **Spray carpets with an anti-allergen product** that kills dust mites. Use a vacuum designed to trap dust particles
- **Encase your mattress and pillows** in special allergen-proof covers to create a barrier between you and the dust mites
- **Remove clutter, books, and decorative objects**, which can collect dust and pollen
- **Run a dehumidifier to eliminate moisture** in damp areas such as the basement
- **Bathe pets regularly if they live indoors** and keep them off your bed
- **Wash your hair daily** to remove pollen
- At home, **remove your shoes at the door and change your clothes** to avoid carrying around allergens. Wash clothes in hot water before wearing them again



References: **1.** American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology. *The Allergy Report*. Milwaukee, WI: American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology; 2000. **2.** Williams RD. Watery eyes? Runny nose? Time to spring into action against seasonal allergies. http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/1998/298_nose.html. Accessed February 15, 2008. **3.** Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. Pollen and mold counts. <http://www.aafa.org/display.cfm?id=9&sub=19&cont=264>. Accessed February 15, 2008. **4.** Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. Mold allergy. <http://www.aafa.org/display.cfm?id=9&sub=19&cont=261>. Accessed February 15, 2008. **5.** Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. Pet allergies. <http://www.aafa.org/display.cfm?id=9&sub=19&cont=236>. Accessed February 15, 2008. **6.** Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. Dust mites. <http://www.aafa.org/display.cfm?id=9&sub=19&cont=315>. Accessed February 15, 2008.

Brought to you by:



**Avoid or minimize exposure to allergens—
it's a good way to empower yourself
against bothersome nasal allergy symptoms!**