

# WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT MY ALLERGIES?

Allergens are the substances that cause you to experience allergy symptoms. Here are some ways to help limit your exposure to them inside and outside. By limiting your exposure, you may be able to reduce your symptoms and feel better. If you know the allergen that causes your allergy symptoms, you may take specific action against that allergen to minimize exposure.

myallergyguide

From the makers of ZYRTEC®



## When you're inside...

People with indoor allergies usually have symptoms all year long.

- 1 **Filter your air.** HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filters can be used in air conditioning systems and vacuums to trap small allergen particles.
- 2 **Minimize dust mite matter.** Use hypoallergenic bedding with zippered dust-proof covers. Wash sheets and blankets in hot water each week.
- 3 **Control pets.** Keep pets off of upholstered furniture and out of the bedrooms. Before getting a pet, ask your doctor.
- 4 **Manage your child's exposure to allergens.** Wash "cuddle" toys weekly in hot water.
- 5 **Prevent mold.** Since mold needs moisture to survive, try to keep your home dry. Places to guard against mold include basements, bathrooms, shower stalls, refrigerator drip trays, house plants, humidifiers, and garbage pails.
- 6 **Control cockroaches.** Keep food covered and put pet food dishes away after pets are done eating. Wipe off hard surfaces with water, detergent, and 5% bleach (do not mix with other cleaners).

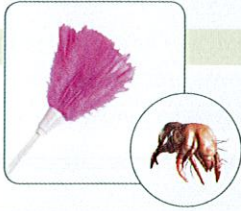
## When you're outside...

People with outdoor allergies tend to have symptoms at specific times during the year—such as during the spring or fall.

- 1 **Find your comfort zone.** Know the limits of your outdoor allergen exposure and try to avoid overexposing yourself. Know the pollen count—pollen counts are available through a variety of sources and phone apps, including zyrtec.com.
- 2 **Keep outdoor allergens out.** On high pollen days, keep doors and windows closed. Shower and change your clothes after you've spent time outdoors. Driving with the windows closed may also help.
- 3 **Be travel smart.** Schedule trips away when pollen levels are the highest where you live. Make sure pollen counts are low where you're going.
- 4 **Stay off the grass.** If possible, exercise on asphalt or cement, at the beach, or at the gym to reduce contact with pollen and mold spores from grass and weeds.
- 5 **Dry clothes inside.** Don't hang your clothing or linens outside to dry. Drying them inside helps avoid getting pollen and mold spores on your clean laundry.
- 6 **Protect yourself.** Use a mask when cutting the lawn or raking leaves. Also, wear clothes that can protect you, like long pants and a long-sleeve shirt.

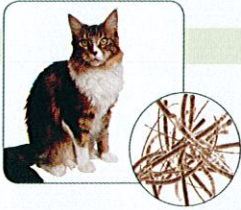


# COMMON INDOOR TRIGGERS



## ***Dust mites***

Even though you can't see them, dust mites live on linens and other materials in your house such as carpets, curtains, and furniture ("upholstered materials"). It's the dust mite droppings that trigger an allergic reaction.



## ***Pet dander***

Pet allergies are caused by a protein that is found in an animal's saliva, urine and blood. This protein can also be found on flakes from the animal's skin (called "dander"), and on the animal's fur after it cleans itself.



## ***Mold spores (indoor)***

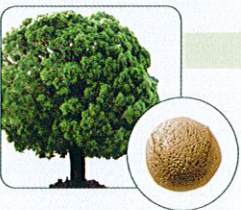
Inhaling or touching mold can lead to immediate or delayed symptoms. Mold spores travel through the air and can grow indoors once they land on wet surfaces. Common places to guard against mold include basements, bathrooms, shower stalls, and refrigerator drip trays.

# COMMON OUTDOOR TRIGGERS



## ***Weed pollen***

All pollens are tiny particles carried by the wind, birds, and insects to pollinate plants. The most common weed pollens that cause allergies come from plain-looking plants that do not have showy flowers, such as ragweed and Russian thistle. Weed pollens are usually at their peak in the fall months.



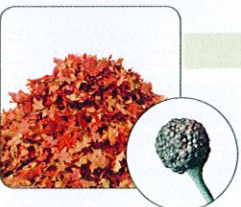
## ***Tree pollen***

Tree pollens that cause the most allergies come from trees like elm, oak, sycamore, hickory, walnut, pecan, birch and cedar. Tree pollen levels are usually at their peak in the spring months.



## ***Grass pollen***

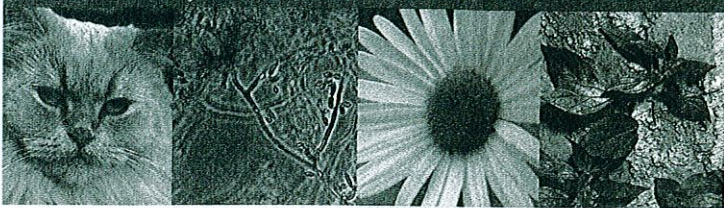
As with tree pollen, grass pollen is regional as well as seasonal. Grass pollen levels can be affected by temperature, time of day, and rain. The most common grasses that cause allergies include Bermuda grass, Kentucky bluegrass, and Timothy grass. Grass pollen levels are usually at their peak in the summer months.



## ***Mold spores (outdoor)***

These tiny airborne reproductive structures are released from mold and are so small that you may not even know you have inhaled them. Outside they can be found in heavy vegetation, hay and straw, grass, raked leaves, and soil.





# Allergen Avoidance Tips

An allergy is an unusual sensitivity to a substance or substances (allergens) that are normally harmless. Airborne allergens like pollen, mold, and animal dander can cause a variety of symptoms, including sneezing, runny nose, or itchy/watery eyes. Minimizing your exposure to offending allergens through avoidance can help reduce your symptoms. The following tips will help you limit your exposure to common airborne allergens.

## Outdoor allergens

### You are allergic to: Pollens

Pollens are the tiny airborne particles given off by trees, weeds, and grasses for the purpose of fertilization. Some pollens circulate only at certain times of the year, while others are present nearly year round. The following tips can help you any time of the year

- If you can, avoid going outside when the pollen count is high
- Check your local paper and weather reports for pollen count forecasts. You can also log on to <http://www.pollen.com/Pollen.com.asp> to obtain updated pollen counts for your local area
- Have someone kill weeds by cutting them or using weed killers
- Keep windows closed and use air conditioners when possible
- Avoid plants related to ragweed (such as zinnias, chrysanthemums, marigolds, dahlias, or sunflowers)
- Use High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters and vacuum cleaners

## Mold allergens

### You are allergic to: Outdoor Mold

Molds live both indoors and outdoors. They give off spores that can cause allergic reactions. The following steps can help you avoid exposure to outdoor mold

- Refrain from walking through uncut fields
- Avoid mowing grass, handling mulch or compost, raking leaves, or working with hay
- Avoid barns, greenhouses, sleeping bags, and summer cottages
- Keep windows and doors closed
- Avoid using fans that draw in outside air—use air conditioning

### You are allergic to: Indoor Mold

The following steps can help you avoid exposure to indoor mold

- Wash evaporative ("swamp") coolers
- Fix all water leaks
- Use air conditioning and dehumidifier to reduce indoor humidity to less than 50% if possible
- Frequently clean furnace filters, refrigerator, and dehumidifier (and clean drip pans with bleach)
- Thoroughly dry clothes before storing
- Clean moldy areas with fungicide or bleach
- Discard moldy belongings
- Run bathroom vent when showering or bathing
- Avoid living in the basement

Patient Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Indoor allergens**

### You are allergic to: Cockroaches

Cockroach saliva, fecal material, and cast skins are the main sensitizers for humans. The following tips are meant to aid in cockroach prevention and eradication. Thorough cleaning is required after extermination

- Use insecticides or a professional exterminator to eliminate cockroaches
- Place bait traps
- Vacuum thoroughly
- Wash dishes daily
- Keep food or garbage in closed containers and take out garbage regularly
- Don't store paper bags, newspapers, or cardboard boxes
- Seal plumbing openings, cracks, and crevices
- Store food in sealed containers

### You are allergic to: Animal Dander

Allergy to an animal (such as a cat or dog) is actually a sensitivity to the pet's skin flakes and fur. The following tips can help you limit your exposure to these allergens

- If you own a furred pet, you may wish to find it a new home
- If you wish to keep your pet, try to keep it outdoors as much as possible
- Try not to let your pet into your bedroom
- Confine your pet to a room with a polished floor and wipeable furniture
- Use a HEPA filter
- Wash your pet weekly in warm water
- Encase mattresses, pillows, and box springs in allergen-proof coverings

### You are allergic to: House Dust Mites

Dust mites are invisible creatures that live in house dust and feed on dead skin flakes. Most tips to handle dust mites involve regular cleaning of the home and furnishings (including curtains and bedding)

- Keep the bedroom clean—avoid clutter
- Vacuum or dust weekly
- Use allergen-proof casings for mattresses and pillows
- Wash bedding weekly in hot water (130°F)
- Avoid area during (and 20 minutes after) cleaning
- Avoid being present during housecleaning, if possible, or wear an appropriate mask if you are cleaning
- Change furnace and air conditioner filters regularly
- Replace upholstered furniture with leather, vinyl, wood, or plastic
- Use only washable window curtains

### Additional Resources

For more information on allergies and avoidance, visit these helpful Web sites:

<http://www.aafa.org>

<http://allergies.about.com>

<http://www.allergyanswers.us>

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