



# Breathe easy and free

## A GUIDE TO MANAGING SPRINGTIME ALLERGIES

**S**pring brings blooming trees, lush grasses, and wily weeds—and about 40 million Americans start to itch, sneeze, and wheeze.

It's called hay fever or seasonal allergic rhinitis. Trees and plants send their dustlike pollen to our noses, and a chain reaction of congestion, scratchy throat, and watery eyes begins.

To prepare for this season, give the inside of your home a deep cleaning. During winter months, windows, shelves, and vents collect dust and mold that can cause allergy attacks.

Other allergy-fighting strategies:

- ▶ Stay indoors with the windows closed in the morning. Pollen counts tend to be highest from 5 a.m. to 10 a.m.
- ▶ Wear a pollen-filtering face mask when outdoors.
- ▶ Use the clothes dryer instead of the clothesline. Allergens can collect on laundry as it hangs outside.
- ▶ Wash bedding in hot water every week.
- ▶ When possible, keep the windows closed and the air conditioning on at home or in the car.

Medicines can help manage symptoms of seasonal allergies. Some over-the-counter choices include:

- ▶ Antihistamines to relieve itching in the nose and eyes, sneezing, and nasal drainage. Check the label to

be sure the product you choose doesn't cause drowsiness.

- ▶ Eye drops to relieve itchiness and other symptoms.
- ▶ Decongestants to ease congestion and swelling.

Talk to your doctor if nonprescription medicines don't control your symptoms. Prescription versions may work better, or your doctor may suggest combining different medicines to help you breathe easier.

Allergy shots may also be an option. The shots can help gradually decrease sensitivity to things that cause allergy symptoms. Shots are the best way to reduce allergy symptoms over a long period of time, according to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.



Find local allergy and pollen information at [weather.com](http://weather.com). Select *Healthy Living*, then *Allergies & Pollen Count*, and enter your ZIP code.