

# Your Health

## Safety Precaution Tips Against Seasonal Allergies

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### WHAT IS HAY FEVER?

Hay Fever is the most common type of seasonal allergies experienced by the susceptible individuals during fall weather starting from mid-August until mid-October and gradually subsides with the onset of frost. Hay Fever is characterized by symptoms of running nose, sneezing, itchy and watery eyes, loss of smell sensation temporarily due to constant running nose, headaches and fatigue. The Hay Fever afflicts patients of all ages and if not treated might lead to serious illnesses like bronchitis, pneumonia, etc. During the fall seasons, persistence of hay fever might trigger asthmatic attack in the asthmatic individuals.

Autumn allergies vary depending upon what part of the state you live in because humidity and other climate conditions play an important role in triggering your allergic symptoms. For example, people living in Michigan, the East Coast and the Mid-west areas suffer from hay fever more than those living on the West Coast. People living



in California usually suffer from allergies due to pollen from Chinese Elm trees.

### WHAT ARE INHALANT ALLERGIES?

The inhalant allergies or a reaction to airborne allergens are characterized by symptoms of allergies such as running nose, watery and itchy eyes, sneezing, etc. aggravated by changes in the environment such as during spring and fall seasons.

These frequent offending factors in the environment include pollen from grass, weeds, trees, molds, dust mites and animal danders. What are the common precipitating factors causing Hay Fever?

**Ragweeds** – This particular type of weed commonly found on roadsides produces a yellowish type of pollen carried by the wind and produces allergic symptoms in allergy prone individuals.

**Molds** – The molds usually grow in cool dark places and increases during the end of summer until frost arrives. It is commonly found on plants, vegetables, and piles of raked leaves and in fields.

Dust – This is a year-round problem and the increase in house dust during fall cleaning, turning on the furnace or using blankets that have been stored during summer, all these factors precipitate the allergic symptoms in susceptible individuals due to dust mites.

Other weeds causing Hay Fever include Chinese Elm trees, Sage, Burweed, Russian Thistle and Lamb's wool, etc.

Pets – Allergic symptoms are also triggered by contact with animal danders, pets or exposure to second hand smoking.

#### **WHAT ARE OTHER FORMS OF ALLERGIES?**

There are some serious forms of allergies that need immediate treatment such as Penicillin allergy, bee stings, etc. since these individuals can develop breathing difficulties and might die of suffocation due to Edema of air passages if not treated immediately. Food allergies are characterized by symptoms of allergies precipitated by eating certain foods such as seafood, chocolate, eggs, etc. Food allergies are more common in infants and young children. Contact allergies develop due to skin exposure to poison ivy plants or any chemical detergent and is characterized by itching and skin rash.

#### **SAFETY PRECAUTION TIPS TO PROTECT YOU AGAINST ALLERGIES**

##### **HOME TREATMENT:**

Keep a record of your symptoms, and the plants, animals, food or chemicals that trigger the attack of allergies and try to avoid them.

If your symptoms are related to pollens and dust, keep your house clean and while driving, keep windows up.

Limit the time you and your pet spend outside when pollen counts are high since pets may bring large amounts of pollen into your home.

Try to keep your bedroom, kitchen and family room areas clean and dust free.

Cover your mattress and box springs with dust proof cases and wipe them clean weekly. Avoid using wool or down blankets and feather pillows.

Wash your bed sheets and pillowcases weekly in hot water.

Consider using air purifier with HEPA filter in your home.

Get your chimney and furnace checked before starting fireplaces and gas heaters.

Keep your house well ventilated and dry. If the symptoms of allergies persist throughout the year they may be related to molds or mildews. Keep the humidity below 50 percent and use a dehumidifier during humid weather.

If you suffer from asthma, DO NOT take aspirin, Ibuprofen and similar pain medication since they can trigger an asthmatic attack.

Reduce your risk of cold and flu by washing your hands often and getting a flu shot each year.

##### **Clean your humidifier frequently.**

Do regular exercises or swimming. Water aerobics may be a good choice because the

moist air is less likely to trigger an attack. Avoid strenuous exercises since they might precipitate an asthmatic attack.

Take care of your heart. Get a periodic check-up because if you have a lung problem it is important to keep your heart as healthy as possible.

Use HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Arrestor) air purifier, a HEPA vacuum and mite proof mattress and pillow covers.

#### **HOME TREATMENT FOR ASTHMA:**

Learn to use a peak flow meter to monitor your ability to exhale and use it regularly.

If you suffer from severe asthma, ask your doctor for a written care plan to guide you in adding medication to your inhaler.

#### **ONCE AN ASTHMA ATTACK DEVELOPS**

Learn to use a metered dose inhaler with the right amount of medication.

Keep a record of what triggers an attack and avoid them.

DO NOT smoke and avoid crowds where people are smoking.

Get yourself involved with relaxation exercises.

People with asthma usually do better in warm moist air than cool dry air. If you are feeling tight, stand or sit in a warm shower for 5 to 10 minutes.

Get frequent check-ups with your doctor. Know what symptoms to watch for, how to treatment them and when to call the doctor.

#### **WHAT ARE THE SIMPLE HOME REMEDIES FOR HAY FEVER?**

Allergies due to pets, food, house dust, and dust mites can be treated by avoiding those factors.

Antihistamines usually help clear up runny nose, sneezing and itchy eyes but may cause drowsiness and difficulty in concentration.

Oral decongestants help clear stuffy clogged nose, however, it might cause insomnia or loss of appetite, rebound phenomenon if used for a long time.

Combination of antihistamine and decongestant help clear up running nose, sneezing and stuffy nose however, can cause drowsiness, difficulty in concentration, behavior problems, insomnia or loss of appetite.

Over the counter nasal spray helps clear stuffy nose, however, should not be used more than five consecutive days because one can get addicted to it and once stopped might cause rebound phenomenon. Prescription nasal spray such as Intal are usually preventive during the season, however, they are NOT safe for younger children.

Allergy shots are helpful however, one has to make frequent visits for the shots is they are NOT cost effective.

It is important to remember that allergies can start at any age, might run in families and certain safety precautions observed during the change of season has a favorable outcome on the susceptible individual.