

Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

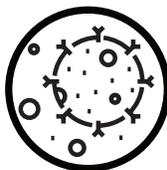
Airborne Allergies

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What Are Allergies?

Airborne allergies are abnormal immune system reactions to things that are typically harmless to most people. Pollen and dust are common airborne allergens that can cause allergic reactions. Although allergies are often hereditary, children do not automatically have allergies because parents or family members do. Likewise, some children have allergies even if other family members do not.

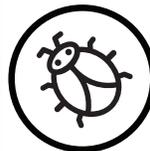


Reports have indicated up to 50 million Americans, including millions of kids, exhibit some type of allergy. Also, an estimated 2 million missed school days each year are attributed to children suffering from allergies. Spring allergies begin in February and last until early summer. The most common fall allergen is ragweed, a plant that blooms and releases pollen from August to November.

Common Airborne Allergens (carried through the air):



- **Pollen** - Trees, weeds, and grasses - Pollen allergies are seasonal. Pollen counts are usually higher in the morning and on warm, dry, windy days. They are lowest when it is cool and wet.



- **Dust mites** - microscopic insects that are the main allergic component of house dust. They are often present year-round and found in bedding, upholstery, and carpets.



- **Molds** - fungi that thrive both indoors and outside in warm, moist environments.



- **Pets** - allergens caused by pet dander and animal saliva.

Airborne Allergy Symptoms

More than two-thirds of spring allergy sufferers actually have year-round symptoms.



- sneezing
- watery eyes
- itchy nose and/or throat
- stuffy nose
- coughing

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(cont.)

Diagnosis and Treatment of Allergies



If your child exhibits cold-like symptoms lasting longer than two weeks or develops a “cold” at the same time every year, talk with your doctor. The doctor may diagnose an allergy and prescribe medicines or recommend the use of over the counter medications, including antihistamines, eye drops, and nasal sprays. Parents should educate their children about the identified allergy as well as the reactions they can have when exposed to the specific allergens.

The best way to cope with airborne allergies is to avoid the allergens. In some instances, a referral to an allergist (a doctor who is an expert in the treatment of allergies) will be recommended for further allergy tests. Additionally, doctors may recommend allergy shots (immunotherapy) to help desensitize a person to an allergen. Allergy shots are only helpful for allergens such as dust, mold, pollens, animals, and insect stings.



Tips to Avoid Airborne Allergens:



- Monitor pollen and mold counts. Weather reports on radio and television often include this information during allergy seasons.



- To avoid pollen, know which pollens you are sensitive to and then check pollen counts. In spring and summer, during tree and grass pollen season, levels are highest in the evening. In late summer and early fall, during ragweed pollen season, levels are highest in the morning.



- If your child has a pollen allergy, keep the windows closed when pollen season is at its peak, have your child take a bath or shower and change clothes after being outdoors, and don't let him or her mow the lawn.



- Keep family pets out of your child's bedroom.



- Remove carpets or rugs from your child's room (hard floors do not collect dust as much as carpets do).



- Clean when your child is not in the room.

- Use special covers to seal pillows and mattresses if your child is allergic to dust mites.

- Keep children who are allergic to mold away from damp areas and keep bathrooms and other mold-prone areas clean and dry.

Resources:

“All About Allergies” by KidsHealth (2016) Retrieved 5-3-18 from <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/allergy.html>

“Common Seasonal Allergy Triggers” (2017) Retrieved 5-3-18 from <https://acaai.org/allergies/seasonalallergies>

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