

Tips to Manage Seasonal Allergies this Spring

Millions of Americans struggle with seasonal allergies, especially in the spring when grasses grow and flowers are in bloom.

If you've noticed spring allergies becoming worse in recent years, you're not alone. Studies show a 20 percent increase in pollen counts nationwide since 1990. This leads to a longer, more intense allergy season, says William Anderegg, an associate professor of biology at the University of Utah.

"Warmer temperatures, higher concentrations of carbon dioxide and increased precipitation can all contribute to plants growing bigger and producing more pollen over longer periods of time," he told *The New York Times*.

Symptoms of seasonal allergies can be similar to those of the common cold or sinus infection, but there are ways to help you determine your specific ailment:

- Symptoms like sneezing, a runny nose and congestion usually appear one at a time with a cold or sinus infection, as opposed to all at once with allergies.

- Nasal discharges associated with allergies are commonly clear, thin or watery, while colds and sinus infections can produce discharges with a thicker, yellowish consistency.

- Colds and infections are sometimes accompanied by a fever, while seasonal allergies are not.

To minimize discomfort due to seasonal allergies, use these tips:

Be prepared

Take allergy medications before you head outside. Children or adults with asthma should use a combination of nasal sprays, eye drops and antihistamines as approved by their doctors.

Focus on Personal Hygiene

Keep your hands away from your eyes and face when you're outside. Take a shower or a bath each night to remove

pollen and dust from your hair and skin, and bathe pets often.

Use Tools to Your Advantage

Pollen.com provides a national allergy map that is constantly updated to show areas of the country with high counts, and you refine the search to your ZIP code. Other apps are available to track air quality and pollen counts, so you can plan outdoor activities accordingly.

Mild allergy symptoms often can be controlled by over-the-counter medications. If you have more severe symptoms, or if they occur year-round, talk to your doctor.

Sources:

- news.blueshieldca.com
"Second Opinion: 4 Tips to Proactively Manage Spring Allergies"
- The New York Times "Spring Allergy Season Is Getting Worse. Here's What to Know."

