

AVOIDING SEASONAL ALLERGIES

Every spring, the smells of freshly cut grass, blossoming tree buds and blooming flowers send more than fifty million Americans to the doctor in search of relief from seasonal allergies. Itchy eyes, scratchy throats, runny noses and congestion commonly occur when the immune system intercepts the pollens and mold spores that are released into the air by growing flowers, grass, and trees. The body interprets the foreign substances as unrecognized and unwelcomed invaders and releases antihistamines to counteract the allergen.

While there is no medical miracle for combatting or curing seasonal allergies, certain things *are* within your control:

Keep your windows shut. When the weather warms up, your first instinct may be to open the windows to “air things out.” However, your health may suffer from the pollens drawn in by the breeze. Singing along with the car radio may not be as much fun without the windows rolled down, but you’ll be less likely to inhale allergens and environmental toxins if you run the air conditioner instead.

Check your timing. Pollen levels are at their highest between five o’clock and ten o’clock in the morning, and rise again at dusk. If at all possible, remain indoors as much as possible during these timeframes and on very hot or windy days. No matter how tempting it is to sleep with the windows open at night, that cooling breeze could actually increase the severity of your allergy symptoms. Be grateful for the occasional rainy day, when pollen counts are at their lowest.

Cover up. It may look funny or feel inconvenient, but if you suffer from allergies, consider wearing gloves and a mask over your mouth and nose when cleaning or doing yard work. Wear sunglasses or goggles to keep pollen out of your eyes, along with a wide-brim hat to prevent it from settling in your hair. Since pollen can stick to clothing, you may wish to run the dryer instead of using the clothesline. Change your outfit when you come indoors, and a quick shower before bed will prevent pollens from settling on your pillowcases and sheets.

Don’t let itchy, watery eyes blur your enjoyment of watching the flowers blossom! Even one small change to your routine can decrease the severity of your spring allergies.