



Tips for Reducing Exposure to Common Allergens

Millions of Americans suffer from nasal allergies, commonly known as hay fever. Often fragrant flowers are blamed for the uncomfortable symptoms, yet they are rarely the cause; their pollens are too heavy to be airborne. Many common substances can be allergens. Food, mold, dust, feathers, animal dander, chemicals, drugs such as penicillin, and environmental pollutants commonly cause many to suffer allergic reactions. Some tips to reduce your exposure include:

- Wear a pollen mask when mowing grass or house cleaning (most drugstores sell them).
- Change the air filters regularly in heating and air conditioning systems, and/or install an air purifier (one with a filter in it).
- Keep windows and doors closed during heavy pollen seasons.
- Rid the home of sources of mildew.
- Don't allow dander-producing animals (i.e., cats, dogs, etc.) into the home and bedroom.
- Change feather pillows, woolen blankets, and woolen clothing to cotton or synthetic materials.
- Enclose mattress, box springs, and pillows in plastic barrier cloth.
- Wash bed linens, blankets and comforters regularly.
- Use antihistamines and decongestants as necessary and as tolerated. Overuse of decongestants though can be the source headaches and a dependence on them.
- Sleep with the head of the bed tilted upward. Elevating the head of the bed helps relieve nasal congestion. Avoid using multiple pillows to do this however.
- Observe general good health practices: exercise daily, do not smoke, avoid air pollutants, eat a balanced diet, and supplement diet with vitamins, especially vitamin C.
- Use a humidifier in the winter to maintain the humidity between 30 and 50%. Often humidifiers on the furnace alone are not enough. Be sure to clean the humidifier regularly to avoid mold build-up.
- Discuss hay fever and allergy symptoms with a physician when experiencing an allergic reaction.

For more information and tips controlling allergies, and for free patient education materials on ear, nose, and throat conditions, visit www.entdoctors.org