

## Outdoor Allergens

An allergen is something in your environment that can cause allergy symptoms. Symptoms include:

- Sneezing
- Itchy watery red eyes
- Runny nose
- Nasal congestion

Outdoor allergens have certain seasons of the year when they are present. Pollen and mold spores are carried by the wind. Some pollen can travel hundreds of miles. This is why warm, dry, and windy weather often makes allergy symptoms worse. Since pollen and mold are carried by the wind, it will not help to remove plants or trees in your yard.

### Outdoor Allergen Seasons in Wisconsin

- Tree pollen occurs from April through early June.
- Grass pollen occurs from mid-May through June.
- Ragweed pollen occurs August through September. Common weed pollen increases in the late summer into the fall months. Peak time for ragweed pollen is about the time that school begins in the fall.
- Mold spores can appear in the early spring, but peak in warmer, humid months, such as July through October. Mold spores may be present until there is full snow cover.

### Steps to Limit Pollen and Mold Exposure

- Keep windows closed and use air conditioning.
- Stay indoors when the pollen or mold counts are high.
- Wear a pollen mask if you cannot avoid going outdoors or if you are doing yard work.
- Avoid mowing lawns or raking leaves. These chores will stir up pollen and molds.
- Avoid hanging laundry outside to dry. Pollen and molds can cling to laundry and be brought indoors.
- Shower and change clothes after you have been outdoors for a long time. Pollen and mold can be carried indoors on clothes and hair. Pets such as cats and dogs can also carry pollen inside. They should be bathed more often during pollen seasons.
- Think about taking a vacation during high pollen seasons and travel to an area with less pollen.

### Treating Outdoor Allergy Symptoms

Medicines can help allergy symptoms. Take the allergy medicine as prescribed. These medicines can include:

- Antihistamine (helps runny/itchy nose/eyes, sneezing)
- Nose spray (helps nasal stuffiness)
- Eye drops (helps itchy eyes)

Immunotherapy or allergy “shots” may be used for children and adults who still have symptoms even while taking allergy medicines.

You can find out more about outdoor allergens through the National Allergy Bureau (NAB) at: [www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org).

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©8/2019. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7383.