

Health Awareness

Prepare For Allergy Season This Fall

(NAPS)—More than 50 million* Americans suffer from allergies each year and for many of them, there are some added anxieties. For example, many people don't realize allergies can be deadly. Or that eating local honey, living in a dry climate or avoiding cut flowers won't cure allergies or prevent an allergic reaction. And these days, there's often the question: Is it allergies or is it COVID-19? Fortunately, there are tests doctors can perform that can help them make that distinction. Here are a few facts that can help you, too.

What To Look For

Allergy symptoms can include:

- Watery Eyes
- Congestion
- Runny Nose
- Itchy Eyes
- Vomiting and/or stomach cramps
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Pale or blue skin
- Weak pulse
- Hives
- Repeated cough
- Tight, hoarse throat, trouble swallowing, swollen tongue

What is an Allergy?

Allergies are the sixth leading cause of chronic illness in the U.S. An allergy is an overreaction of the body's immune system to an ordinarily harmless substance. Allergies exist throughout the year, indoors and out, and affect people of all ages. Animal dander, house dust mites, foods, grasses, trees, weeds, and molds can all trigger an allergic reaction.



Autumn Allergies

Some allergies are seasonal and more likely to occur at different times of the year. The most common culprit for fall allergies is ragweed, which grows wild almost everywhere, generally between August and November. A number of plants that thrive during cool nights and warm days also trigger fall allergies.

Who is Affected?

Twenty to 40 percent of the population—including at least one of every four children—suffers from allergies*.

People with allergies are often sensitive to more than one allergen. Prevention or treatment can make the difference between chronic illness and a productive, healthy life.

Diagnosing Allergies

Unfortunately, many of these also show up when someone has a cold, the

An infographic titled "Do you know YOUR seasonal allergies?". At the top, it lists symptoms: Sneezing, Watery Eyes, Congestion, Runny Nose, and Itchy Eyes, each with a corresponding icon of a person or a body part. Below this, it states "You may have allergies all year-round." and shows a circular diagram with four quadrants representing seasons: Spring (Yellow), Summer (Green), Winter (Blue), and Fall (Red). Each quadrant lists common allergens: Spring (Tree Pollen, Weed Pollen, Grass Pollen, Mold, Cockroach, Dust Mite); Summer (Grass Pollen, Ragweed, Mold, Mites); Winter (Mold, Pet Dander, Cockroach, Dust Mite); and Fall (Ragweed, Weed Pollen, Mold, Dust Mite). At the bottom, it lists "Categories covered with the OPTIGEN® blood allergy test": Tree Pollen, Grass Pollen, Weed Pollen, Mold, Mites, Pet Dander, Cockroach, and Dust Mite. It also includes the text "Ask your healthcare provider about blood allergy testing today!" and the Minaris logo.

Allergies can sometimes be confused with other conditions. Fortunately, doctors now have ways to tell the difference.

flu or even COVID-19 but doctors do have ways to tell the difference. The first step is to identify allergen-specific antibodies called Immunoglobulin E (IgE). This can be done two ways.

1. **Skin Prick Testing:** Commonly performed on the forearm and sometimes the back, the skin is cleaned with alcohol and an allergen extract is pricked into the skin. If an allergy is present, a small itchy bump and surrounding redness often referred to as a "wheal and flare" will appear in about 15 minutes. This indicates the specific allergen.
2. **In-Vitro Testing:** The doctor simply draws a small amount of blood and has it tested in a lab. It is a less invasive method and receives test results within 24 hours. Many professional medical societies recommend also using in-vitro tests such as the OPTIGEN® Allergy Test.

So, once you know you have allergies, what can be done? Here are some options.

Treatments

Allergy management falls into three main categories: avoidance, medication and immunotherapy.

Avoidance: Once the source of an allergy is identified, a solution may be to simply avoid it. This is most effective with food and animal allergies.

Medication: Prescription drugs can reduce allergy symptoms. Many are effective immediately, though some may have side effects or not work for everybody.

Immunotherapy: Allergy shots are given frequently in scheduled doses of gradually increasing concentrations using extracts containing relevant allergens. The idea is to slowly desensitize the body to the offending allergens. Ideally, an injection program can be discontinued after some years.

Learn More

For further facts and tips on dealing with allergies, visit www.henryschein.com/MinarisMedical.

* Retini, M. (2017, December 1). Allergy Statistics and Allergy Facts. <https://www.webmd.com/allergies/allergy-statistics>.