

Pollen - a trigger for hay fever

Plant pollen is well known as a trigger for seasonal allergic rhinitis (hay fever) and seasonal allergic conjunctivitis.

Up to four out of five people with asthma also have allergies like hay fever – either at certain times of the year or all year round. For these people, it's helpful to know which pollens are the cause of symptoms as some pollens can be avoided more easily than others.



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Disclaimer: It is important to note that information contained in this fact sheet is not intended to replace professional medical advice. Any questions regarding a medical diagnosis or treatment should be directed to a medical practitioner.

The main culprits are pollen from imported grasses, weeds and trees, which are wind pollinated. Australian native plants are usually not the culprit, although there are exceptions, such as cypress pine.

Allergies are not usually triggered by highly flowered plants as they produce less pollen (which is transported by bees) than wind pollinated plants.

The following information and tips may also help, particularly during seasons when you experience symptoms:

Pollen information

- If you live in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane or Canberra, check the pollen forecast (available during the main pollen season) in each of those cities.
- Check the guide to common allergic pollens here allergy.org.au/patients/allergic-rhinitis-hay-fever-and-sinusitis/guide-to-common-allergenic-pollen

Medication

- Managing conditions with the help of your doctor and taking prescribed medications as directed is important.
- Allergy testing can help identify specific triggers, along with recording when and where symptoms are experienced.
- In addition to prescription medicines, there are a number of over-the-counter products that may alleviate symptoms.

In your garden

- Do not mow the grass yourself and stay inside when it is being mown. If mowing is unavoidable, wear a mask or consider taking a non-drowsy antihistamine if your doctor has suggested this
- Consider planting a low allergen garden with plants pollinated by birds or insects as these are less likely to trigger allergic rhinitis or asthma
- If you are sensitive to particular weeds or trees that are outside your bedroom window, have them removed

In your home

- Keep windows closed
- Do not dry washing on an outside clothes-line
- Indoor plants tend not to be the source of pollen, but may cause symptoms because of mould growth, or fragrances
- Shower (and wash clothes that have been exposed to the elements) when you arrive home and rinse your eyes frequently with water
- If you still experience symptoms indoors, an air purifier may help.

Getting out and about

- Use your prescribed medications before going outdoors when pollen cannot be avoided, and keep your asthma reliever with you
- Try to avoid going outdoors on days with high pollen counts, on windy days or after thunderstorms. Otherwise try and stay indoors until after midday as pollen is released in the morning.
- Wear sunglasses (or normal glasses) to protect your eyes
- Keep windows closed when in your car, ensure your car has cabin air filtration (and the filter is periodically changed) and/or use recirculating air conditioning in your car
- Avoid picnics in the park or country areas and try to plan your holidays out of the pollen season or holiday at the seaside

An itchy, runny or blocked nose due to allergies can make your asthma harder to control. If that sounds like you, make sure you talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

You might also like to check out our Sensitive Choice Creating a Healthy Home page which has great tips for managing pollen and other triggers in and around your home.

www.sensitivechoice.com/creating-a-healthy-home

Need more information?

Visit National Asthma Council Australia's website nationalasthma.org.au