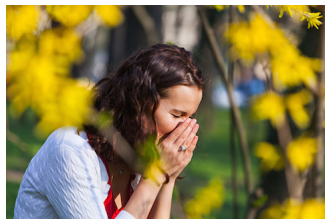


Tips for Managing and Coping with Allergies

Written by Sara Goodwin



Allergy season. We all know it, we all suffer from it—whether you have an actual allergy (hello, itchy eyes, congestion and sneezing) or you're one of the “lucky” ones who doesn't have an allergy, but still get to hear the constant sneezing and sniffing of those who do, allergy season is fun for no one. Read on to find out tips on how to manage your allergies from Tonya Winders, CEO of the [Allergy & Asthma Network](#), a patient center network focused on outreach, education, advocacy and research.

First off, what exactly is an allergy? “An actual allergy is when the body over responds...to a substance that ordinarily would not be anything of harm or concern,” Winders says.

An allergy can be anything as mild as a seasonal hay fever, which more than 50 million American suffer with to life-threatening like food or venom allergies that 7 to 8 million Americans have.

When your body goes into hyper-response mode due to some substance it recognizes as harmful, it begins to produce IgE, an antibody, which binds to the allergen and fights it and causes inflammatory symptoms

At this point in our lives, we all may think we know if we have allergies are not, but are you playing off what might be an allergy as a summer cold?

A cold generally resolves itself in seven to 10 days. “If cold symptoms last for longer than seven to 10 days then you can rest assured that it's not just a cold, and that it's more likely to be allergies,” Winders says. “So that's one sure fire way to know.”

If you're realizing you might have allergy symptoms, the time of year you start noticing symptoms could also tell you what you're allergic to. Winders explains that if patients notice symptoms in the spring, they probably have a grass or tree allergy, while if they notice symptoms in the fall, it's more likely to be ragweed.

Winders says that one of the most common misconceptions about allergies is that it's a minor condition—that you can just take medication and carry on. “But in fact, some quality of life studies have shown that patients with allergies actually have a lower quality of life than those with more chronic conditions like asthma.” The reason? If you can't breathe, are congested, have a runny nose, you feel miserable and you won't sleep well. Not only that, but you're more susceptible to viral conditions.

An Ohio State University study has also revealed that people who suffer from allergies can miss up to 32 hours of work in a week. “That general feeling of misery—they're unable to go to work and be as productive as what they would normally be.”

And while some allergy medications may relieve the symptoms, they often have major side effects such as drowsiness, and this can also reduce a person's productivity.

Finally, if your medication is helping but you still need more allergy relief, here are some of Winder's suggestions.

- Avoid peak pollen times during allergy season. Winders says usually the news will give the pollen counts at different times of day, so try to avoid outdoor activities during that time.
- Always shower before bed and keep your bedroom windows closed. By showering before bed, you're removing any allergen that may be on your clothes or skin, so you won't be breathing them in all night long. And by keeping the windows closed, there won't be any breezes that will also help you sleep better.
- And if you have a pet allergy, keep them out of the bedroom. This will also help better breathing at night, which will lead also lead to better sleep.