

Dear Parents,

Spring and seasonal allergies are here! Seasonal allergies, also known as hay fever or seasonal allergic rhinitis, are allergy symptoms that occur during certain times of the year, usually when outdoor molds release their spores or trees, grasses and weeds release tiny pollen particles into the air. Ten to 30 percent of adults and up to 40 percent of children experience seasonal allergies. Seasonal allergies can start at almost any time, but they usually develop by 10 years of age.

The immune systems of people who are allergic to mold spores or pollen treat these particles (called allergens) as invaders and release chemicals, including histamine, into the bloodstream to defend against them. It's the release of these chemicals that causes allergy symptoms.

Spring allergies are caused by tree pollens. Summer pollens come mainly from wild grasses in uncut, untended wooded areas and fields. Fall allergies are triggered mostly by weed pollen.

**Symptom check: Is it a cold or allergy?**

Symptom	Cold	Allergy
Cough	Usually	Sometimes
General aches and pains	Sometimes	Never
Fatigue and weakness	Sometimes	Sometimes
Itchy eyes	Rarely	Usually
Sneezing	Usually	Usually
Sore throat	Usually	Rarely
Runny nose	Usually	Usually
Stuffy nose	Usually	Usually
Fever	Sometimes	Never

**Treatment**

There is no real cure for seasonal allergies, but it is possible to relieve symptoms. Start by reducing or eliminating exposure to allergens. During allergy season, keep windows closed, use air conditioning if possible, and change your air filter often. Remove shoes at the door to avoid tracking allergens to the rest of the house.

At school, we remind children to wash their hands and not touch their faces after coming in from outside. In the nurse's office, I can rinse eyes if necessary with saline eye drops. If your child is having an extreme reaction and must stay inside, we will need a note. It is important for children and teens to have time to run and play outside.

If reducing exposure to allergens isn't possible or is ineffective, medicines can help ease allergy symptoms. There are many non-drowsy antihistamines, nasal sprays and eye drops available as a prescription and over the counter. Many of these medicines can be taken at home **once** a day.

**\*\* It helps to reduce the severity of symptoms by starting medication about a month before pollination occurs and to take medication regularly.\*\***

Please talk to your physician about what would be best for your child. Be assured that we will call you if your child's allergy or asthma symptoms are severe. A parent can always bring in medication and administer it to their child if needed.

Thank you,

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