General Tips for Avoiding Outdoor Allergens

Once you have identified your allergy triggers, you can take the following steps to minimize your exposure, no matter which pollens or mold lead to your symptoms:

- Know the pollen count and stay indoors when it is high.
- When indoors, keep windows closed and use central air conditioning with a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter.
- Use a dehumidifier.
- In your car, keep the windows closed.
- Pollen counts are usually highest in morning and mid-day, so it is best to do outdoors activities later in the day.
- The best time to go outdoors is after a heavy rain.
- If you can, delegate lawn mowing, weed pulling and other gardening chores.
- If you do outside chores, wear a dust mask. An inexpensive painter’s mask is fine.
- Wash your hands frequently. Pollen gets on your hands throughout the day. If you rub your eyes with pollen on your hands, the pollen will irritate your eyes.
- If you have been outdoors when pollen counts are high, remove clothes you’ve worn outside. You may also want to shower to rinse pollen from hair and skin.
- Wear sunglasses. Sunglasses deflect the wind that can carry pollen into your eyes.
- Pollen clings to pet fur and is carried inside. If your pets go outdoors, bathe them once a week and keep them out of the house while working on hot, humid days.
- Dry clothes in an automatic clothes dryer rather than hanging them outside. Pollen sticks to sheets and towels.
- If you can, travel during the height of pollen season to areas free from the plants to which you are allergic.
- The best time to go outdoors is after a heavy rain.
- Pollen counts are lowest during chilly, wet periods.
- Much pollen is released early in the morning, shortly after dawn. This results in high counts near the source plants. Pollen travels best on warm, dry, breezy days and peaks in urban areas midday.
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Additional Tips for Avoiding Outdoor Molds

- Remove decaying debris from your yard, roof and gutters.
- Avoid raking leaves or working with peat, mulch, hay or dead wood. If you must do yard work, wear a mask and avoid working on hot, humid days.
- Dry clothes in an automatic clothes dryer rather than hanging them outside. Pollen sticks to sheets and towels.
- If you can, travel during the height of pollen season to areas free from the plants to which you are allergic.

Additional Tips for Avoiding Grass Pollen

- Keep grass cut short.
- Choose ground covers that don’t produce much pollen, such as Irish moss or dichondra.

Additional Tips for Avoiding Tree Pollen

- Plant trees that do not aggravate allergies such as crape myrtle, dogwood, fig, fir, or the female cultivars of ash, box elder, cottonwood, maple or willow trees.

The Pollen Count and Mold Count

The pollen count tells us how many grains of plant pollen were in a certain amount of air during a set period of time. The mold count tells us how many mold spores. The counts reported are always for a past time period and may not describe what is currently in the air. Some monitoring services give “total pollen” counts that do not break out the particular pollen or mold that causes an individual’s reaction. This means that the published pollen count may not relate closely to your symptoms. But knowing the count can help you decide when to stay indoors.

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The following websites provide pollen and/or mold counts for local areas:

- **Pollen.com** Once you enter the zip code for your locale, this site gives you a four-day pollen forecast as well as a listing of predominant pollens.
- **The National Allergy Bureau Pollen and Mold Counts** This site provides the National Allergy Bureau Pollen and Mold Report for your locale.
- **Accu pollen** A project of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, this site provides a New York Metropolitan and New Jersey Pollen Forecast as well as a pollen directory.

What about my carbon footprint?

Because of concern for the environment, many people choose to keep their windows open rather than use an air conditioner or to hang their laundry outside to dry rather than use an automatic clothes drier. However, if you suffer from seasonal allergies, you may want to use your air conditioner or clothes dryer to minimize your exposure to pollen or mold spores. There are many other ways you can reduce carbon emissions at home while keeping your allergy symptoms at bay. For a list of steps you can take, visit GreenerChoices.org - Global warming solutions.

Upcoming Email Topic

- **Allergy Medications**

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**Sources**

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, American Academy of Otolaryngology, American Lung Association, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Consumers Union of United States, National Institute of Health, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Library of Medicine, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, SDI Health, University of Medicine and Dentistry New Jersey, and WebMD.