

# Before Registering, Take Measures vs. Allergies

(BPT) – Spring. The time of year when, as poet Alfred Lord Tennyson famously said, a young man's (and woman's) fancy "lightly turns to thoughts of love." That is, of course, if you're not sneezing, coughing or dealing with itchy eyes. Spring allergies seem to get worse every year. Is there anything you can do to avoid them?

Yes, says allergist Todd Mahr, MD, president of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI). "You might feel like suffering from allergies is going to happen every spring no matter what, but there are ways to help alleviate your symptoms."

These eight ACAAI tips will help you enjoy the season instead of sitting it out indoors.

1. See an allergist. Before the season kicks in, make an appointment with an allergist to find out exactly what is causing those itchy, watery eyes. Discovering the allergen that you're reacting to is the first

step in treating it. The ACAAI's Allergist Locator can help you find a board-certified allergist in your area.

2. Find out if it's allergies or asthma. Or both. The symptoms from asthma can be similar to those of allergies. To make matters worse, allergies plus asthma can be a one-two punch for some allergy sufferers. Almost 75 percent of asthma sufferers also have allergies. Your allergist can diagnose what's causing your symptoms and offer suggestions for treatment so you can start living the life you want to live.

3. Consider allergy shots... They may be the best way to treat tree, grass, mold, dust mite, cat and dog allergies. Allergy shots are immunotherapy. That means your allergist will gradually give you increasingly larger doses of whatever you're allergic to. There are also tablets that melt under your tongue to treat allergies to ragweed, grass pollen and dust mites. Both forms create a tolerance within your immune system.

4. ...or get a prescription. Research has shown that most allergy sufferers find prescription medications more effective than those they can get over the counter. But most people don't go in search of a prescription. An allergist can discover what you're allergic to and prescribe the right medication to ease your symptoms.

5. Start medication before the season hits. Don't wait. Much like successful pain management involves getting in front of pain before it kicks into high gear, by taking your allergy medications before the worst symptoms develop, you'll be doing a lot to alleviate those symptoms. If you usually start feeling it in March or April, start taking your medications in February.

6. Commit to a thorough spring cleaning. It's not just to give the house a fresh look after the long winter. A deep clean will reduce allergens like mold, which build up in basements and other areas where you might not go every day. It's also a great way to get rid of the pet hair and dander that have built up in places like your sofa. Wash throw rugs regularly, too, in hot water.

7. Wash the day away before going to bed. Take a shower and wash your hair before hitting the hay to rinse away pollen

and other allergens you've picked up during the day. Similarly, wash your sheets and bedding once a week in hot water.

8. Use the AC. It's tempting to throw open the windows and let that fresh spring air waft into the house. The only problem is, pollen and other allergens will waft in with it. Instead, use your air conditioner and make sure the filter is clean. Change your filter every three months and use one with a MERV rating of 11 or 12.

With a few commonsense tactics, you can get ahead of your allergies and keep them in the rear-view mirror all season long.

## About ACAAI

The ACAAI is a professional medical organization of more than 6,000 allergists-immunologists and allied health professionals, headquartered in Arlington Heights, Ill. The College fosters a culture of collaboration and congeniality in which its members work together and with others toward the common goals of patient care, education, advocacy and research. ACAAI allergists are board-certified physicians trained to diagnose allergies and asthma, administer immunotherapy and provide patients with the best treatment outcomes.

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