

## When Kids' Allergies Strike in the Fall

School is in session, and just like clockwork your 8-year-old starts sneezing, sniffing, and snorting—not to mention clearing her throat and blowing her nose like there's no tomorrow. Poor thing! What's going on?

Chances are it's allergies—the immune system's abnormal reaction to a substance that would normally be quite harmless.<sup>1</sup> Up to 40 percent of children in the U.S. have nasal allergies.<sup>2</sup>

How can you know for sure whether allergies are the culprit? One way is to have your child see the pediatrician, who may find clues in places like nasal mucous membranes. But the only way to identify specific triggers is to do allergy testing.<sup>1</sup>

**Outdoor allergens.** Also known as hay fever, seasonal allergies often bring images of springtime sufferers, so common when many plants begin to bloom. In the fall, however, outdoor allergens such as ragweed and tumbleweed may also release tiny pollen and wreak major havoc—especially in the morning.<sup>2,3</sup>

**Indoor allergens.** But that's not all. In the fall, your child begins spending more time inside at school and home. That's why many indoor allergens may then also rear their ugly heads.<sup>4</sup>

Here's just a sample:

- Dust mites, a microscopic insect that lives in bedding, sofas, and carpets
- Mold
- Animal allergens such as fur, skin, feathers, or saliva
- Clothing and toys made or stuffed with animal hair
- Latex in rubber gloves, toys, or balloons, as well as in the elastic found in clothing<sup>3,4</sup>

**Avoiding triggers.** You don't have a lot of control over indoor allergens at school. But there certainly are some things you can do to protect your child. Here's a small sample of steps you can take:

- Use air conditioners and keep windows closed in your car and at home to reduce exposure to pollen.
- Have your child avoid playing in piles of dead leaves if mold allergies are a problem.



- Take steps to reduce mold growth in the home. For example, fix leaky plumbing, remove bathroom carpets, and control indoor humidity.
- Vacuum upholstered furniture and wash linens weekly and other bedding every 1 to 2 weeks in hot water.
- Limit stuffed animals in the bedroom. Yes, I know.... That might be a tough sell.
- Replace pillows every 2 to 3 years.
- Encase pillows, mattresses, and comforters in special covers that keep dust mites out.

<sup>1,3,4</sup>

Avoiding triggers is the best way to prevent the symptoms of allergies. But keep in mind that it can take three to six months to see an improvement in symptoms once indoor triggers are removed.<sup>3</sup>

**Talk time.** Sometimes avoiding triggers is not enough to control symptoms. Before you stock up on loads of over-the-counter drugs, however, swing by and have a talk with me. I can point you to products in our store and guide you on their use. Also, make sure to have a conversation with your child's pediatrician. Sometimes allergy testing or prescription medications are needed to bring real relief.<sup>1</sup>

*Nothing herein constitutes medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or is a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition.*

## Sources

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