

Your Allergies Are Getting Worse, Here's Why

By: *[Providence Health Team](#)*

Itchy eyes and a runny nose signal this time of year—allergy season. But have you noticed something new this year? Are your allergies worse than last year? Does it seem like they've been getting worse every year? If so, you're not imagining it.

Seasonal allergies, also known as hay fever or allergic rhinitis, are more common than ever, and there's a spike in the number of people reporting them for the first time.

Some symptoms are due to environmental factors, while others are caused by conditions at home. No matter the source, there are things you can do to alleviate the misery. Here are the top culprits making your allergies worse each year, and ways to find relief.

Climate Change

Climate change is a top reason for awful allergy symptoms that last longer. As the planet's median temperature and CO₂ levels rise, plants bloom earlier and for longer periods of time, thus making "pollen season" worse. If itching and sneezing are too much to handle, try one of the many effective over-the-counter antihistamines.

Weather

Dry, sunny and windy days often signal the onset of the sneezing and itching. These environmental conditions are ideal for trees to release pollen, which is then blown into and around your eyes and nose. Even in winter, a drastic temperature change can cause symptoms that seem like allergic rhinitis. You can check the National Allergy Bureau website for current pollen counts in your area and stay indoors on high-pollen-count days. Use a household humidifier to protect sensitive tissues and rinse out your nasal cavity with a saline solution. We wrote about this in a recent [blog post](#).

Stress

Most people understand the negative effects of stress on their health, but there is also a connection between stress and allergies. Stress causes inflammation, which tends to make tissues more susceptible to irritants. Furthermore, stress hormones stimulate the production of blood proteins (IgE) that cause allergic reactions, according to a study conducted at the University of Mississippi. If you're under stress and experiencing bad allergies, make a list of your stressors and take steps to reduce them. Regular exercise and adequate sleep are great ways to boost your overall health and cut allergy symptoms.

Beer and wine

Alcohol can worsen the symptoms of hay fever, although you don't likely have an allergy to alcohol itself. It's the histamines in alcoholic beverages that usually cause symptoms. You may also have an underlying allergy to the wheat or preservatives in beer and wine. Prevent symptoms by sticking to grain-free booze like vodka, tequila or rum. Avoid drinks with added sulfites, flavors or carbonation. To be certain of what's triggering your sneezing and itching, ask your medical provider for an allergy test.

If your allergy symptoms are interfering with your daily life, it's time to see a health care provider to get tested for allergies.

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