

[IMAGE]

5 Ways to Survive the Worst Allergy Season Ever

By Editorial Staff

Spring is in the air – literally, in the form of massive pollen levels that are causing an historic spike in cases of seasonal allergy, also known as allergic rhinitis. In fact, health experts are calling this the worst allergy season on record, which means the tactics you overlooked *last* year to survive the sneezing, coughing, runny nose, itchy eyes and various other symptoms may require real attention this time around. Bad news for spring-lovers who can't wait to emerge from their winter cocoons and enjoy the outdoors. After all, who wants to smell the flowers when doing so causes you to feel miserable?

If you're an allergy sufferer who's used to "getting away" with minimal attention to allergy avoidance, this is definitely *not* the year to push the envelope. With an early spring and record pollen levels, you could be asking for trouble – big trouble. Here are five ways to minimize your risk of succumbing to seasonal allergies this year:

1. Pick your spots: One of the best ways to minimize your exposure to allergens such as pollen is to make smart choices. For example, pollen levels tend to be highest in the morning or when it hasn't rained in awhile. And let's not get started on wind, which can not only circulate pollen, but also tends to cause allergy-like symptoms – a bad combination that can ruin your day.

allergy season - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark 2. *Keep it out:* Unless you've got a garden in your living room, the good news about pollen is that it's outside, which means you can take a few simple steps to keep it there. For starters, keep windows closed whenever possible (especially if it's windy). If you've been out, change your clothes once you get in the house, and try not to repeat-wear clothing. If it's been a particularly bad day in terms of pollen and/or you've spent most or all of the day outdoors, you may want to throw your clothes directly into the washer. And speaking of that garden in your living room, avoid bringing flowers into the house – unless putting a romantic gesture on display is worth the allergy symptoms that may accompany it.

3. Seek shade: The eyes are often the hardest hit by allergy symptoms. No one wants to spend their day rubbing watery, itchy, dry, red eyes, and trust us, it doesn't look good when you're making that big

presentation in the boardroom. Two tips: 1) Wear sunglasses whenever you're outside during allergy season. (This is also a good idea because with spring comes sunnier skies, putting your eyes at risk for sun damage if they aren't protected.) 2) Carry saline drops to keep your eyes moist throughout the day, which will help when pollen, dust, etc., inevitably attack your field of vision.

4. *Clean up:* It's amazing how many health issues can be minimized with the simple act of washing your hands, and when it comes to seasonal allergies, it's a great recommendation. During allergy season, it becomes even more important because pollen and other irritants transfer easily from your hands to your face / mouth if you're not careful (much like germs that cause the common cold).

5. *Eat smart:* Research suggests vitamin C, which is found in a variety of fruits and vegetables, in addition to being available in supplement form, provides an antihistamine benefit that may help minimize allergy symptoms. (Histamine is released from cells as part of an allergic reaction.) Probiotics or "healthy bacteria," found in yogurt and increasingly added to a number of food products, also may reduce allergic symptoms caused by exposure to pollen. And don't forget that in general, a balanced diet high in antioxidants and other immune-boosting compounds helps your body defend whenever it's attacked – even by allergens.

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