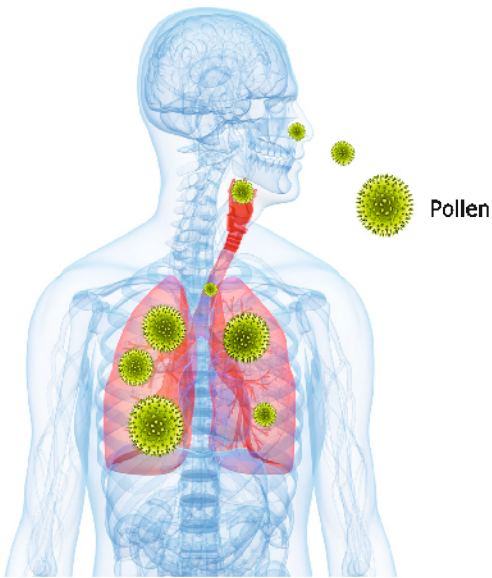


- ⓐ The skin is then pricked so the allergen goes under the skin's surface.
- ⓑ The healthcare provider closely watches the skin for swelling and redness or other signs of a reaction. Results are usually seen within 15 to 20 minutes.

With a skin prick test, your doctor will use a needle to place a tiny amount of pollen extract (liquid substance) just below the surface of the skin on your lower arm or back. If you are allergic, there will be swelling or redness at the test site.

A blood test can also be done.



What can you do to avoid coming in contact with pollen allergens?

As primary mode of therapy, it is recommended to avoid exposure to sensitizing allergens as follows.

- ⓐ Avoid going outdoors on days when pollen are present in high concentration in air.
- ⓑ Close all windows in evening, when pollen generally settles down.
- ⓒ Air conditioning decreases indoor pollen counts.
- ⓓ Do not plant lot of trees and shrubs around your house.
- ⓔ Take a bath after coming from outdoors and use fresh clothes.

Of all the airborne things that can cause an allergy, pollen is one of the most widespread. Many of the foods, drugs, or animals that cause allergies can be avoided to a great extent. Short of staying indoors when the pollen count is high - and even that may not help - there is no easy way to evade windborne pollen.

Hence, it is important to know the type of pollen you are allergic to and take preventive measures/medications to help control it.

What are the treatment options available?

Because it is nearly impossible to avoid contact with pollen, you might be able to control your symptoms with medications like antihistamines, corticosteroids, decongestants etc.

Allergen immunotherapy could provide long lasting benefit. You can "train" your immune system not to react exaggerated to an allergen anymore. This is done through a series of allergy shots called immunotherapy. One to two weekly shots expose you to very small doses of the allergen, that causes an allergic reaction. The dose is gradually increased, usually during a three to six months period. Maintenance shots are needed every four weeks for three to five years. Immunotherapy is usually used when other treatments like antisympomatic medication are not satisfactory.



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CLINIC**



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Allergy facts

- ⓐ Allergy involves an exaggerated response of the immune system, often to common substances such as foods, house dust mites or pollen.
- ⓑ The immune system is an intricate system that defends the body against foreign invaders like bacteria or viruses.
- ⓒ Allergens are substances that are foreign to the body, normally not harmful but can cause an overreaction in allergic patients.
- ⓓ Immunoglobulin E (IgE) is the antibody that triggers the allergic reaction.
- ⓔ Allergies cannot only develop at any age, but many individuals also outgrow allergies over time.
- ⓕ While environment plays a role in allergy development, there is a greater risk of developing allergic conditions if a person has a family history of allergy, especially in parents or siblings.

What is pollen allergy?

Each spring, summer, and fall, tiny particles are released from trees, weeds and grasses. These particles, known as pollen, hitch rides on currents of air. Although their mission is to fertilize parts of other plants, many never reach their targets. Instead, they enter human noses and throats, triggering a type of seasonal allergic rhinitis called pollen allergy, which many people know as hay fever or rose fever (depending on the season in which the symptoms occur).

What is pollen?

Plants produce round pollen grains that must be moved from one plant to another of the same kind for fertilization to occur. Individual grains are too tiny to see with the naked eye, but some can form large, visible clusters.

The types of pollen that most commonly cause allergic reactions are produced by the plain-looking plants (trees, grasses and weeds) that do not have showy flowers. These plants manufacture small,

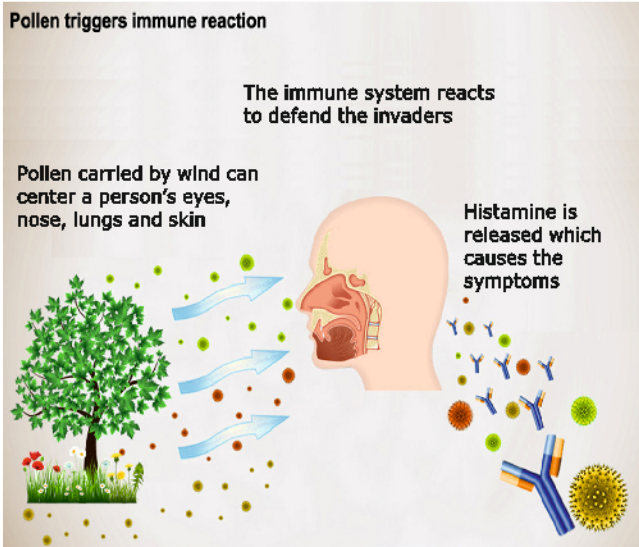


light, dry pollen granules that are custom-made for wind transport.

Wind and birds carry this pollen from plant to plant to fertilize them. When people who have a pollen allergy inhale the pollen, they get allergy symptoms.

When do plants make pollen?

One of the obvious features of pollen allergy is its seasonal nature - people have symptoms only when the pollen grains to which they are allergic are in the air. Each plant pollinates more or less at the same time from year to year.



Which plants that have pollen are most likely to cause allergy symptoms?

One of the obvious features of pollen allergy is its seasonal nature - people have symptoms only when the pollen grains to which they are allergic are in the air. Each plant pollinates more or less at the same time from year to year.

Geographical differences in the prevalence of pollens causing allergy

City	Pollen
Kolhapur	Parthenium
Delhi	Amaranthus
Bikaner	Prosopis
Bhopal and Kanpur	Brassica
Vishakhapatnam	Artemisia
Hyderabad	Sorghum, Pennisetum and Artemisia

What is a pollen count?

A pollen count, often reported by local weather stations or web sites (www.accuweather.com), is a measure of how many pollen particles are in the air. This count represents the concentration of all the pollen (or of one particular type, like ragweed) in the air in a certain area at a specific time.

Pollen counts tend to be the highest early in the morning on warm, dry, breezy days and the lowest during chilly, wet periods. Although the pollen count changes, it is useful as a general guide for when it may be wise for you to stay indoors and avoid contact with that pollen.

What are the symptoms of pollen allergies?

The symptoms of pollen allergies include sneezing; runny or stuffy nose; itchy throat or inside of ears; hives; swollen eyelids and itchy eyes; and coughing, wheezing and trouble breathing.



How can pollen allergy be diagnosed?

One of the best ways to combat pollen allergies is to understand which pollens you are allergic to. Your doctor can test you for various types of trees, weeds, and grasses, and provide you with a list of pollens that affect you adversely.

A skin prick test can find out whether you have antibodies that react to a specific allergen.

Skin prick test.

The skin prick test involves:

- ⓐ Placing a small amount of substances that may be causing your symptoms on the skin, most often on the forearm, only in exceptional cases the skin of the prostrate back can be used as an alternative.

Did you know...

Plants with brightly colored flowers and sweet smells rarely cause allergy symptoms? That is because insects and birds rather than wind usually carry the pollen from these plants.