

## **Winter's Over – But My Nose Still Runs! - Avoiding some pitfalls of spring allergies**

Why does a cold seem to hang on so long? A runny nose, watery eyes, sneezing, coughing, itchy eyes/nose, and dark circles under the eyes are all signs of an allergy — and spring has an allergy season of its own.

Tree, grass, and weed pollens seem to explode in the spring, especially with a wet spring. So while “April showers bring May flowers,” they also bring pollen, which can send our immune systems into overdrive. Tree, grass, and weed pollens are light and are spread by the wind. Flower pollens, for the most part, pose no risk to people who suffer from allergies because these pollens are heavy and sticky, and are spread by bees and birds.

When allergies are at their worst, over-the-counter drugs, such as antihistamines, decongestants, a combination of the two, and nasal sprays, may be taken to alleviate the symptoms. More intense allergies may require a doctor's care and a prescription.

Here are some ways to avoid the pitfalls of spring allergies:

- Know the pollen count and stay indoors when it is high.
- Close the windows at night.
- Use air-conditioning, which cleans the air of pollen.
- Avoid outdoor activities between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m., when pollen is released. The pollen count declines as the day goes on.
- Keep the car windows closed when driving.
- Do not mow the lawn during the grass pollen season and stay away from freshly cut grass.
- Do not hang sheets or clothing out to dry. They collect pollen.

Summer is just around the corner, so don't let the pollen of spring take away the enjoyment of hiking.

By Julie Wojcik