

Winter Allergies

Why Allergies Can Still Bother You When It's Cold

Most people think allergies only happen in spring or summer, when flowers bloom and pollen is everywhere. But allergies can also be a problem in the winter. Winter allergies might be less obvious, but they can still make you feel miserable. This article explains what causes winter allergies, what symptoms you might have, and how you can manage them, so you know why you might sneeze even when it's cold outside.

What Causes Winter Allergies?

Winter allergies are different from the ones you get in warmer seasons. Instead of outdoor pollen, most winter allergies are caused by things inside your home. Since we spend more time indoors when it's chilly, we get exposed to these triggers more often. Here are some common causes:

- Dust mites: Tiny bugs that live in places like beds, couches, and carpets. Their waste makes allergies worse.
- Mold: Mold grows in damp places like bathrooms and basements. Mold spores can make allergy symptoms worse.
- Pet dander: Little flakes of skin or hair from pets, plus proteins in their saliva and urine, can cause allergic reactions, especially when you're inside for long periods.
- Indoor air pollution: Things like smoke from fireplaces, strong-smelling candles, and cleaning sprays can irritate your nose and throat.

Symptoms of Winter Allergies

Winter allergy symptoms can seem a lot like having a cold, so it's not always easy to tell the difference. Common signs include:

- Runny or stuffy nose
- Itchy or watery eyes
- A lot of sneezing
- Coughing or a scratchy throat
- Trouble breathing or wheezing (sometimes)

A cold usually goes away after a week or two, but allergy symptoms stick around as long as you're exposed to the allergen.

How to Prevent and Manage Winter Allergies

The best way to deal with winter allergies is to lower the amount of allergens in your home and treat your symptoms. Here are some tips:

1. **Keep things clean:** Vacuum often with a HEPA filter, wash your sheets in hot water every week, and keep clutter to a minimum.
2. **Reduce humidity:** Use a dehumidifier to keep the air dry, which helps stop mold and dust mites from growing.
3. **Limit pet contact:** Wash and brush your pets regularly. Try to keep them out of your bedroom and off soft furniture.
4. **Ventilate your home:** Use fans in bathrooms and kitchens, and open windows sometimes to get fresh air.
5. **Use air purifiers:** Air cleaners with HEPA filters can help get rid of allergens in the air.
6. **Try medicine:** Allergy medicines like antihistamines or nasal sprays can help you feel better. If your symptoms don't get better, talk to your doctor.

Conclusion

Winter allergies are more common than people think. By knowing what causes them and following some simple steps, you can feel better and enjoy the colder months. If you still have problems after trying these tips, ask your provider for advice so you can find the right treatment for you.