



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Seasonal Allergies

You may be one of the millions of people affected by seasonal allergies. Whether they happen in the spring, in the fall, or even year-round, don't let nasal congestion, runny nose, and watery eyes get you down. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Allergen	A substance that triggers an allergic reaction.
Allergic Rhinitis	Inflammation and swelling in the nose, also known as hay fever, that is caused by an allergic reaction to pollen and other allergens in the air. Common symptoms include itchy, watery eyes and a runny, stuffy nose.
Urticaria (Hives)	Red, raised itchy areas on the skin that develop as part of an allergic response. Urticaria can be small or large and can last for variable periods of time, anywhere from minutes to months. Hives that last longer than six weeks are referred to as chronic urticaria.
Conjunctivitis	Inflammation of the clear membrane that covers the white part of the eye. When conjunctivitis is caused by allergies, you may experience itching, redness, and increased tearing from the eye.
Decongestant	Medication that decreases swelling in the nasal tissues. This makes it easier to breathe through the nose. Decongestants are available in pill form and as nasal sprays.
Antihistamine	Medication that prevents histamine from binding to your cells. When histamine binds to your cells as part of the allergic response, it causes them to swell and leak fluid. This can trigger symptoms like nasal congestion, runny nose, and sneezing. Antihistamines are effective medications that can decrease these symptoms.
Immunotherapy	Also known as allergy shots, a treatment that increases your tolerance to specific allergens. These allergens are injected into your body by a doctor in multiple sessions over several months. Your symptoms will decrease and hopefully go away over time. This treatment is usually reserved for people with more severe or chronic symptoms.
Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA)	A screening test that looks to see if you are allergic to a specific allergen. An allergen is added to a sample of your blood. A test is positive if you have immunoglobulins (IgE) in your blood that bind to that allergen.
Skin Prick Test	A test performed in your doctor's office that checks for specific allergies. A small amount of an allergen is scratched into your skin with a needle and you are monitored for a local reaction. If a test is positive, you will develop a small red bump over the area.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your seasonal allergies.

About Symptoms

- How do I know if my symptoms are caused by allergies and not from a cold?
- How long can I expect my symptoms to last?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- Can you outgrow seasonal allergies?
- Is it possible to develop seasonal allergies as an adult even if I did not have them as a child?
- Am I more likely to have seasonal allergies because I have pets?

About Diagnosis

- What are the best tests to screen for allergies and how accurate are they?
- Will my insurance pay for allergy testing?
- Do I need to see an allergist?

About Treatment

- Is it safe to use over-the-counter medications every day?
- Are over-the-counter medications as effective as prescription medications for seasonal allergies?
- Are allergy shots a reasonable treatment option for me?
- Are there non-medication treatment options that can help my symptoms?

About Coping

- Are there lifestyle changes that will make it easier for me to cope with symptoms?
- How often should I see a doctor?

About Living With Seasonal Allergies

- Should I get a HEPA filter for my house to clear the air?
- Should I try to stay indoors as much as possible during allergy season, i.e., during high pollen counts?
