

Allergies and the body

Seasonal allergic rhinitis:

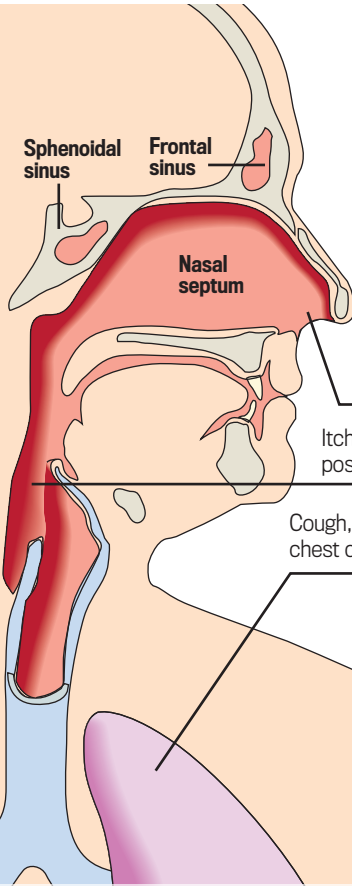
Allergies occur during specific flowering periods during the season when plants are shedding pollen. In general, trees flower in the spring, grasses in summer and weeds in the fall.

Body overreacts:

When the immune system overreacts to an allergen, it produces immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies, which travel to cells and trigger reactions.

Symptoms:

Itchy/red eyes, nasal congestion, runny nose, sneezing, swollen throat, coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, upset stomach, hives and itching



Molds: Fungi found indoors and outdoors can cause allergic reactions. Grow best in warm, damp and humid conditions. Spread and reproduce by making spores and travel far.

10 to 20 percent

Americans are allergic to ragweeds

Ragweed allergies are particularly bad this year due to the weather in recent months. Warmer temperatures and plentiful rainfall have contributed to a bumper crop of ragweed.

Ragweed



Ragweed pollen spore

About 40-50 million

Americans have allergic conditions

About 36 million

Americans with seasonal allergies

Mid-August to the first frost

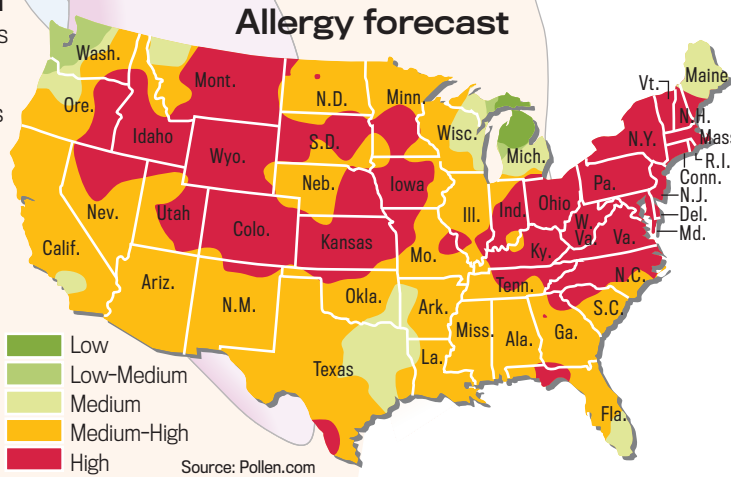
Ragweed season

1 billion

Pollen grains produced by each plant per season

400 Miles

Distance ragweed pollen grains can travel



Cold or allergy?

Allergies: Symptoms begin immediately after exposure. These include runny noses with clear discharge; itchy nose, eyes, ears and throat; sneezing spells. Treatment includes over-the-counter antihistamines, nasal steroids, decongestants

Cold: Symptoms strengthen 1-3 days after exposure to virus and can include fever, fatigue, muscle aches, runny noses with clear to green discharges. They typically last 5-7 days.

Symptom	Cold	Allergy
Cough	Usually	Sometimes
General aches and pains	Sometimes	Never
Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes
Itchy eyes	Rarely	Usually
Sneezing	Usually	Usually
Sore throat	Usually	Sometimes
Runny nose	Usually	Usually
Stuffy nose	Usually	Usually
Fever	Rarely	Never

Sources: Adapted from National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases 2008, Mayo Clinic



University of Illinois

Tips on dealing with ragweed

- Track the pollen count for your area
- Stay indoors in central air conditioning with a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter attachment
- Shower nightly to avoid transmitting pollen into bed
- Bathe pets frequently
- Use prescribed medications and immunotherapy

Source: Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

Sources: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Tim Summers / The Detroit News