

Mission In Motion
Health & Wellness
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Fall Tip

Fit Facts: Relief When Allergies Won't Let Up

What can you do when you can't find relief from your allergy-induced sniffles? Staying indoors all season isn't an option. When you're allergic to something, your immune system behaves as if the substance is harmful to your body, these reactions most often result in watery eyes, congestion, nasal discharge, and an itchy throat and nose.

Talk to your doctor about your best options. What will work for you will depend on your symptoms and other factors:

- Antihistamines, which are available over the counter and by prescription, can relieve runny noses and itchy eyes. But they don't help congestion. To avoid drowsiness, choose a non-sedating variety.
- Prescription nasal steroid sprays can relieve congestion and most other allergy symptoms. Start using before allergy season sets in to prevent symptoms.
- Decongestants are available as over-the-counter (OTC) pills, nose sprays and nose drops. They can help relieve congestion. However, they may raise blood pressure and cause anxiety and sleeplessness in some individuals. In addition, using the nose sprays or drops for more than three days can backfire causing more congestion when you stop using them.
- Cromolyn sodium, an OTC nasal spray, provides overall allergy relief. However, you need to take it for several weeks before seeing a benefit.
- Leukotriene modifiers have been shown to relieve nasal symptoms, including congestion. But research shows these prescription-only drugs are not quite as effective as nasal steroid sprays or antihistamines.
- Allergy shots, administered by a health care professional, can help people who can't get relief from allergy medicines.

To learn more about managing your allergies, visit the health and wellness section of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas website.

Sources: Mayo Clinic, Kidshealth.org