

Wellness Tips

from Countrywide Benefits



Allergy symptoms can often be confused with the flu or a cold.

Surviving Spring Sneezing

For more than 35 million Americans, the beginning of spring means the onset of irritating seasonal allergies. An allergy is when your body sees an ordinary substance, such as pollen, mold, or dust, as foreign. Your reaction to the foreign object, known as an allergen, can take the form of nasal swelling, coughing or even asthma.

Allergies can occur throughout your life. People who suffered allergies as children may notice that the symptoms quiet down when they hit puberty and then reappear when they are in their 20s, 30s or 40s.

Allergy or Cold?

Seasonal allergies, or what is commonly called hay fever, are caused by pollen from trees, grasses and weeds, or airborne mold spores. Depending on where they live, some people have year-round symptoms that worsen in certain seasons, depending on where they live. Here are some distinguishing signs of allergy symptoms:

- A lingering cough that won't go away. Flu symptoms usually clear up within 10 days.
- Stuffy or runny nose with a clear discharge. A yellowy nasal discharge is more common to colds.
- Violent sneezing and watery itchy eyes are typical of allergies.
- Allergies do not usually cause a fever.

Prevention

Here are a few easy ways to reduce the discomfort of airborne allergies:

- Spring clean your house. Include a thorough dusting of windows, bookshelves and vents in air conditioning units. Mold and dust gathered over the winter aggravate allergies.
- Plan outdoor activities for later in the day. Pollen counts are highest from 5-10 a.m.
- Wash your bedding every week in hot water.
- Shower and wash your hair every evening before going to bed.
- Keep the windows in your car and home closed. Rely on air conditioning.
- Do not mow the lawn, be around fresh cut grass or rake leaves. All these stir up mold and pollen.
- Don't hang your clothes or sheets outside to dry as mold and pollen could collect in them.

Medications such as antihistamines, decongestants and nasal corticosteroids can also help with symptoms. For more acute pain, regular allergy shots may provide the most effective relief. Your Countrywide health care plan provider has resources to help you survive the allergy season. You can also find more information online at these websites:

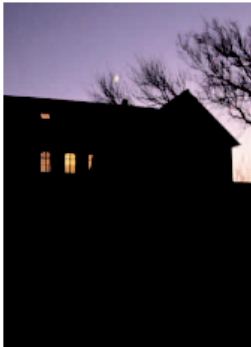
- **American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology** www.aaaai.org
- **Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America** www.aafa.org
- **American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology** www.acaai.org
- **Aetna IntelliHealth** www.intelihealth.com
- **UnitedHealthcare** www.healthforums.com



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Keeping a regular sleep schedule is one of the most important ways to improve the quality of your sleep.

Getting your ZZZs

If you're tired of being tired, you're not alone. According to the National Sleep Foundation, 75% of adult Americans suffer from sleep problems. Prolonged sleepless periods can create a "sleep debt" that can affect your health, relationships and safety.

Some signs that you are not sleeping well are:

- It often takes you more than 30 minutes to fall asleep at night
- Waking up too frequently during the night or too early and having difficulty returning to sleep
- Feeling groggy and tired when you wake up
- Daytime drowsiness, especially during monotonous situations

The most common sleep problems include insomnia, Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) and sleep apnea, which are pauses in deep breathing during sleep. There are several online resources to find out more about the symptoms and treatments for sleep problems.

■ National Sleep Foundation

www.sleepfoundation.org

This independent nonprofit organization supports sleep-related education, research, and advocacy. Its comprehensive website includes interactive quizzes, such as testing your Sleep IQ.

■ Sleep Education.com

www.sleepeducation.com

Sponsored by the the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, this site offers the latest news on disorders and treatments and features an interactive forum and sleep center locator.

■ Sleepnet.com

www.sleepnet.com

A portal consolidating a wide array of sleep-related information including the 'Need Sleep?' global education campaign.

Many people ignore sleep problems but they can be serious and require the help of a medical professional, a benefit that may be covered by your Countrywide health plan. Contact your health care provider for more information.



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