

Hello Fall

Fall Is Approaching!

As the summer months start to fade, many allergy sufferers begin to dread the coming fall allergy season. Sneezing, stuffy, or runny nose, itchy eyes, nose, and throat, or worsening of asthma symptoms are common in people with undiagnosed or poorly managed hay fever. The primary culprit of fall allergies is ragweed pollen. A ragweed plant belongs to the genus *Ambrosia*, and there are 17 different species of ragweed in the United States. While most common in rural areas of the East and Midwest, ragweed can be found throughout the US.



But how much can one plant do? A single plant can produce up to 1 billion pollen grains over the course of a pollen season.

These grains are very light weight and float easily through the air and have been detected as far away as 400 miles out to sea and 2 miles up in the atmosphere. Fall allergy symptoms used to start in mid-August and run through September. However, in many parts of the country these symptoms now begin in early August and extend through October.

Studies suggest that rising temperatures and higher carbon dioxide levels due to climate change can contribute to longer growth time of allergen-producing plants.

In allergic people, the immune system responds to the allergen, in this case ragweed, as a foreign invader. The immune system makes a special type of antibody, called IgE, against the ragweed. When

the ragweed blooms, the pollen attaches to these IgE antibodies and this triggers the release of histamine and other chemical. These chemicals cause allergy symptoms, such as sneezing, runny nose, itchy eyes and, in asthmatics, cough and wheeze, to develop.



So, what is there to do about ragweed allergy? As with all types of allergies there are 4 crucial steps:

1. Determine to what you are allergic. Your physician will take a detailed history of your symptoms, perform a physical exam and perform allergy skin testing to see what your allergic triggers are.
2. Avoidance: Armed with the knowledge of your triggers, you and your doctor will discuss ways to minimize your exposure. For ragweed pollen, this typically involves watching local pollen counts and, when counts are high, planning more indoor activities.
3. Medications: Your doctor can advise as to the best medications for you to effectively treat your symptoms.
4. Immunotherapy: Your physician may recommend immunotherapy. For many patients, avoidance and treating only symptoms of allergies isn't enough. Unlike medications that just treat the symptoms, immunotherapy (or 'allergy shots') work to retrain the immune system and prevent the symptoms from developing at all. Immunotherapy can provide long lasting symptom relief while reducing the need for medications

So, if you are dreading the Fall, contact your trusted physician to map out a plan that works best for you!