

Fun Fact of the Week

6 Ways to Keep Exercising Outside With Allergies*

When you have allergies, even getting a little exercise outdoors can be a challenge. So, before you head outside to get your sweat on, follow these tips to make your workout less itchy and sniffly.

1. Know Your Pollens

Experts use a number rating to tell you much pollen is in the air throughout the day. There are different readings for different types of pollens. A tree pollen level at or above 90 is high, for example, while 1 to 14 is considered low.

Check a web site that tracks pollen counts for trees, mold, weeds, and grass across the U.S. The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology's site does this, for example.

2. Watch the Clock

Depending on your allergy, you may want to avoid certain parts of the day. Ragweed counts usually peak in early midday, while grass pollen counts are higher in late afternoon and early evening. Plan your workouts for other times of the day when levels are lower. If you're in an urban area, winds can bring the pollen in town so that levels peak around midday.

If you go out during high-pollen times, wear a face mask. As soon as you get home, rinse out your nose with saline to get rid of any grains inside. Some nose sprays will make it easier for you to exercise when pollen levels are high. Ask your allergist.

3. Watch the Sky

Avoid outdoor exercise on dry, warm, windy days, which bring the highest pollen levels.

Many types of the allergen cause eye problems, including a noncontagious form of pinkeye that causes itching, redness, and tearing. High humidity can cause problems, too. If the air feels heavy, you may have a hard time breathing. The humidity also fuels mold growth, which can trigger symptoms for some people. On the other hand, rain clears the air, making it a good time to go outdoors if you have allergies.

4. Pick the Right Exercise

Swimming is usually excellent for building up your lungs. Biking is also good. But chlorine from indoor pools can be irritating to some people, so use caution and leave the area if you have trouble breathing. Call 911 if you continue to have any trouble breathing.

Running in cold weather also can trigger symptoms. Usually, it's not a true allergy that causes these problems, but spasms in your airways. With proper treatment, you should be able to do any sport or activity without a problem. If not, you may need to take another look at your treatment plan.



5. Listen to Your Body

If you're taking medicine and you still feel tired after exercising outdoors, or if it causes symptoms that you don't like, you may want to keep your workouts indoors.

6. Take Your Meds Before You Sneeze

Start taking allergy medications a few weeks before the season. Don't wait until you have symptoms. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about over-the-counter and prescription options.

Use medicines that worked for you in the past. Pay attention to the weather, especially when winter weather turns warm and pollens and molds release into the air.