



Allergy & Asthma Center

of Southern Oregon, PC

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POLLEN ALLERGIES

Pollen allergies are a remarkable problem in Southern Oregon and Northern California.

The major seasons in Southwestern Oregon and Northern California are:

- I. **Spring Tree Pollens: Mid February – Mid May** Major pollen producing trees include **Ash, Alder, Birch, Oak, Boxelder, Maple, Cottonwood, Juniper, Sycamore, Mulberry, and Walnut**. Tree pollens can settle into yards and windows, but also are blown for miles in the wind.
- II. **Early Summer Grass Pollens: Mid May – Mid July** All grasses on lawns, fields and hillsides can cause allergies such as **Blue Grass, Timothy, Rye, Fescue, Orchard Grass and other “Northern Pasture Grasses”**. Bermuda Grass is more common in southern climates, but some native species may occur in Oregon. Tall grasses (not cut grass) release very large amounts of pollen on windy mornings, afternoons and as morning dew dries out. **This is the most severe pollen season in Oregon**. Mowing lawns, exposure to hay or tall grass, camping out and using a weed eater could cause marked symptoms in grass allergic individuals. Sleeping with windows open lets pollen blow into the home and build up as dust in bedding and carpets. **Use air conditioning, keep bedroom windows closed, avoid fields and pastures and drive with windows closed to help reduce exposure.**
- III. **Fall Weed Pollens: Mid August – Mid October** Some weeds pollinate as early as June. Pollen counts in the Rogue Valley are fairly low during this pollen season. Much higher exposure is found **in the Klamath Basin where sagebrush, rabbitbush, ragweed, as well as ever present pigweed, plantain, marshelder etc. cause lots of Fall allergies.**

Pollens blow indoors and become dusts causing both seasonal and perennial allergies. Control of pollen allergies requires attempts to minimize pollen exposure, medication use, and frequently immunotherapy or allergy shots. Pollen counts are so high in the Rogue Valley that medications and allergy shots can cope with most but not all of the allergic reaction caused by pollen exposure. Therefore, allergic individuals should reduce their pollen exposure as much as possible whether or not medications and allergy shots are being used. Usually by working with all three approaches (avoidance, medications, and allergy desensitization shots) symptoms caused by pollen allergies may be minimized or hardly noticed at all.

The single most important measure is to keep the inside of your home pollen free. We spend a great deal of time (sleeping, etc.) inside of our homes and by keeping windows and doors closed we can take advantage of this time to reduce our pollen exposure. For most people this necessitates **AIR CONDITIONING**. Central air conditioning is best but a room air conditioner in the bedroom is almost as good. **Try to keep the bedroom or home closed to the outside for the entire pollen season**. Just sleeping in a room that is never open to the outside will reduce overall pollen exposure 30-40%. If these measures are coupled with work in an air conditioned environment, the reduction in pollen exposure can be dramatic.

When you are **IN YOUR CAR** keep the windows up and use air conditioning in your pollen seasons.

If at all possible **AVOID HIGH EXPOSURES** to pollens such as tree trimming or pruning in the tree pollen season, lawn mowing, working with hay, weed cutting, hiking through fields of tall grasses and weeds, camping in meadows etc. **Using weed eaters can cause especially high exposures**. Rinsing your nose with saline sprays such as Ocean can help remove pollens from nasal tissues. Washing your face with a soapy washcloth can help remove pollens from around the eyes. Glasses (or even protective goggles) help reduce pollen contact with the eyes. Pollen masks may be helpful during mowing and weed eating. One episode of intense pollen exposure can cause recurrent symptoms for days even in the absence of further exposure, so be careful with heavy exposures if you can.

Finally, try to time **VACATIONS** with the pollen seasons. Leaving the area is one of the best ways of pollen avoidance. If your worst allergy is to grass pollen, a vacation to a relatively pollen-free area in mid June can work wonders. Even a day or weekend in the mountains or at the coast may be beneficial.

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