

# Cough - Allergic

## Definition

- Cough caused by pollens or other allergic substances

## Health Information

### Symptoms

- Lots of coughing
- The cough can be dry (no mucus) or wet (coughing up mucus)
- Mucus often is sticky and causes repeated throat clearing
- A coughing fit or spell is over 5 minutes of nonstop coughing
- Runny nose and watery eyes may also be present
- Allergic symptoms often have a sudden onset

### Causes

- Reaction to an inhaled substance (called an allergen). Most often this is a pollen.
- Grass, trees, weeds and molds are the most common pollens.
- Allergens can also be from cats, dogs, horses, rabbits and other animals.
- Dust, chemicals, or pollutants can also cause a cough. This is from irritation of the airway, not an allergic reaction.

### Prevention - How to Reduce the Pollen Your Child Breathes

- Pollen is carried in the air.
- Keep windows closed in the home, at least in your child's bedroom.
- Keep windows closed in car. Turn the air conditioner on recirculate.
- Avoid window fans or attic fans. They pull in pollen.
- Try to stay indoors on windy days. Reason: The pollen count is much higher when it's dry and windy.
- Avoid playing with the outdoor dog. Reason: Pollen collects in the fur.
- **Pollen Count.** You can get your daily pollen count from [www.pollen.com](http://www.pollen.com). Just type in your zip code.

## Care Advice

### 1. Overview:

- Pollen allergies are very common. They occur in about 15% of children.
- A cough is a common symptom of allergies.
- Symptoms can be controlled by giving allergy medicines. Use either short-acting (Benadryl) or long-acting (Zyrtec).
- Since pollen allergies recur each year, learn to control the symptoms.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

### 2. Allergy Medicines Short-Acting:

- Allergy medicines are called antihistamines.
- They help control all allergic symptoms.
- Benadryl or Chlorpheniramine (CTM) products are helpful. No prescription is needed. They need to be given every 6 to 8 hours.
- The key to control is to give allergy meds every day during pollen season.
- Regular cough medicines are not helpful for allergic coughs.

3. **Allergy Medicines Long-Acting:**
  - Cetirizine (Zyrtec) and Loratadine (Claritin) are long-acting allergy medicines. No prescription is needed.
  - Advantage: Causes less sedation than older allergy meds such as Benadryl or CTM. They are long-acting and last up to 24 hours.
  - AGE 2- 5 years old, give 2.5 mg (2.5 ml or 1/2 teaspoon) of liquid syrup. Use once daily in the morning.
  - AGE 6-11 years old, give 5 mg chewable tablet once daily in morning.
  - AGE 12 years and older, give 10 mg tablet once daily in morning.
  - Downside: Doesn't control allergy symptoms as well as older allergy medicines. Also, sometimes will have breakthrough symptoms before 24 hours. If that happens, you can give a single dose of Benadryl or CTM.
  - Cost: Ask the pharmacist for a store brand. Reason: Costs less than the brand names.
4. **Homemade Cough Medicine:**
  - Goal: Decrease the irritation or tickle in the throat that causes a dry cough. These treatments can be used along with the allergy medicines.
  - AGE 1 year and older: Use HONEY ½ to 1 teaspoon (2-5 ml) as needed. It works as a homemade cough medicine. It can thin the secretions and loosen the cough. If you don't have any honey, you can use corn syrup.
  - AGE 6 years and older: Use COUGH DROPS to decrease the tickle in the throat. If you don't have any, you can use hard candy.
5. **Coughing Fits or Spells:**
  - Give warm clear fluids to drink. Examples are apple juice and lemonade.
  - Give an extra dose of Benadryl or CTM to stop the breakthrough symptoms.
6. **Avoid Tobacco Smoke:**
  - Tobacco smoke makes coughs much worse.
7. **Wash Pollen Off Body:**
  - Remove pollen from the hair and skin with shampoo and a shower. This is really important before bedtime.
8. **What to Expect:**
  - Coughing from an allergic substance that can be avoided should go away in hours. Examples are a reaction to pets, a barn, raking leaves or air pollution.
  - Coughing during pollen season can last 4-8 weeks. It may return whenever you don't give the allergy medicine. It can flare-up whenever the pollen count goes high.
9. **Return to School:**
  - Your child does not need to miss any school for allergies.

## Call Your Doctor If

- Trouble breathing or swallowing occurs
- Wheezing occurs
- Coughing is not better in 2 days after starting allergy medicine
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

### **Pediatric Care Advice**

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