

Health + Prevention Oct 16, 2017

## Eye Allergies and eye allergy relief – Fast Remedies

Effective therapies, effective protection

**Summer time is hay fever time! A few days of spring sunshine, and most of us begin to look forward to the lazy, hazy days of summer. Many people, however, have other things on their minds: the dreaded allergies that cause red, itchy, watering or even swollen eyes. And for eyeglass or contact lens wearers, the problem is even worse. The culprit: pollen. Many of our organs can be affected by allergic reactions, but it's definitely the eyes that suffer most. BETTER VISION looks at the causes and treatment of eye allergies – and at the available remedies to alleviate acute symptoms.**

### What actually happens during an allergic reaction?

If our bodies come into contact with substances that are alien to them or could pose a potential danger to them, they trigger a defense mechanism. One of these substances is allergens. These are primarily tiny proteins that, generally speaking, do not constitute a threat to the organism.

However, people with allergies develop special antibodies which lead to the release of various tissue hormones in our skin and mucous membranes. The most important of these hormones with regard to allergic symptoms is histamine: it is responsible for many of the body's allergic reactions, like itching, shortness of breath or increased dilation of blood vessels.

The immune system is activated the first time the body experiences the allergen. This process then occurs every time renewed contact takes place. This means if the body has reacted allergically to a substance once, it never forgets. Repeated contact with the substance very quickly leads to an allergic reaction – usually in a matter of minutes, but it can sometimes take up to an hour.

The reaction of the eyes is particularly severe: the conjunctiva and mucous membrane react to the foreign substance immediately, the blood vessels dilate and fluid is released. We experience this in the form of tears, a runny nose, swelling or reddening. The tears gradually flush the allergens out of the eyes, therefore slowly alleviating the symptoms.

**Help is at hand – the right glasses provide protection**

Glasses offer some protection to your distressed eyes during the hay fever season – regardless of whether they are sunglasses or prescription eyeglasses. Wrap models and frames with broad sides are ideal for allergy sufferers. These protect sensitive eyes against bright light, drafts and partly against pollen floating around in the air. > [More information...](#)

## What actually triggers an eye allergy?

Depending on the season of the year, it is usually pollen that causes the most problems. However, there are many other factors that can irritate the conjunctiva of our eyes: animal hairs, dust mites, fungal spores, insect poisons or intolerance to certain types of food, such as gluten. It is essential for the sufferer to find out what exactly is causing his or her allergy. Various tests which can be performed by dermatologists or allergy specialists are available for this purpose. One example is the prick test, which is primarily used to detect a pollen allergy; droplets containing various types of pollen are applied and then scratched into the skin. Don't worry: this does not cause scars. After around 20 minutes, the doctor can tell from the reaction of the skin whether an allergy is present and, if it is, to what, and then develop the appropriate therapy.

The plaster test is used primarily to detect contact allergies. Here, several plasters are adhered to the patient's back. They contain the substances that are assumed to be the culprits triggering the allergy. The plasters are normally worn for a period of 24 to 48 hours and the show the doctor at a single glance to what substances the skin is allergic.

## Can an eye allergy be treated?

Yes, either through a long-term therapy (desensitization) comprising the use of mast cell stabilizers, or using medication known as H1 blockers. If the cause of the eye allergy is known, a specific immune therapy, also known as hypo- or desensitization, helps in 70% of cases. Here, the substance to which the sufferer is allergic is repeatedly administered in a highly diluted form for a period of six months to three years. In this way, the body gradually "accepts" the allergen without displaying defense reactions.

If the patient does not respond to this type of therapy, special anti-allergic medication in the form of eye drops or a nose spray may be an effective alternative. The drug stabilizes the mast cells so that the histamines which they contain are not released. The allergic reaction does not then occur at all, or only to a very minimal extent. The medication must be taken regularly and at the right time. However, it has a prophylactic function only and does not alleviate acute symptoms. It is taken several times a day two to three weeks before the pollen season begins. This type of medication is normally available over the counter.

If the symptoms are acute or severe, such as severe itching, highly selective H1 blockers are the medication of choice. They modify the permeability of blood vessels in the conjunctiva for anti-inflammatory substances, block the histamine receptors and therefore prevent the inflammatory histamine reaction. Eye drops containing this substance are only available by prescription.

## What helps contact lens wearers?

Soft contact lens wearers are at a particular disadvantage if they suffer from hay fever. Although anti-allergic eye drops are excellent to alleviate the symptoms of hay fever, they are not usually very well tolerated by soft contact lenses as these display larger pores than hard contact lenses. The eye drops are deposited in these pores and dissolve parts of the contact lens material, leading to additional irritation of the conjunctiva and cornea. A good alternative for soft contact lens wearers suffering from hay fever is to wear sunglasses with wrap frames or daily disposable contact lenses ("dailies"). These are always taken straight from the packaging each day, which prevents any depositing of pollen on them.

## Practical tips for everyday use

**The following tips will allow you to minimize your exposure to pollen:**

- ✓ A simple, but nonetheless effective tip: clean your glasses regularly with special > [lens wipes from ZEISS](#) which contain no artificial fragrance or aggressive glass cleaning agents.
- ✓ Hang up several wet towels in your house. They will trap some the pollen floating in the air.
- ✓ Keep your windows shut and air the room at certain times only – the least pollen is present in the air between 7 PM and midnight in rural areas, and between 6 and 8 AM in urban areas.
- ✓ Vacuum-clean carpets and mats regularly or replace them with laminate, tile or hardwood flooring.

- ✔ Wash your face and rinse your eyes several times a day, wash your hair before you go to bed, and sleep with your windows closed.
- ✔ Do not undress in the bedroom, but instead in the bathroom. There, the humidity produced by showers, etc. prevents the pollen on clothing from flying around the room.
- ✔ When you are driving, keep the car windows closed and have the ventilation system fitted with a filter.

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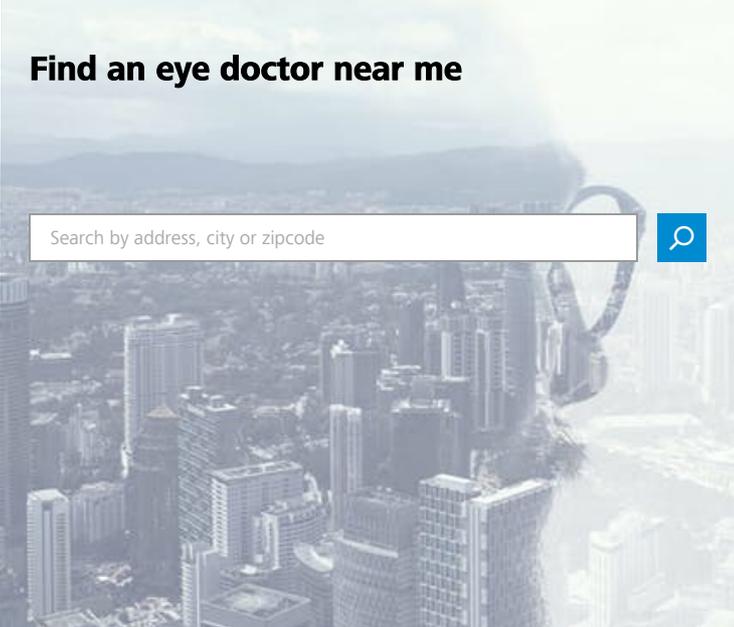
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