

Dear Parents,

Seasonal allergies will soon be here! Seasonal allergies, also known as hay fever or seasonal allergic rhinitis, are allergy symptoms that occur during certain times of the year, usually when outdoor molds release their spores, or trees, grasses and weeds release tiny pollen particles into the air.

The immune systems of people who are allergic to mold spores or pollen treat these particles (called allergens) as invaders and release chemicals, including histamine, into the bloodstream to defend against them. It's the release of these chemicals that causes allergy symptoms.

Tree pollination begins in February and lasts through May, grass pollination from May to June, and weeds from August through October. People with these allergies are more likely to have increased symptoms during those times of the year. St. Louis is known to have high mold counts. Mold spores tend to peak midsummer through the fall.

Seasonal allergies can start at almost any time, but they usually develop by 10 years of age and reach their peak in the early twenties, with symptoms often disappearing later in adulthood.

Symptom Check: Is it a cold or allergy?

<u>Symptom</u>	<u>Cold</u>	<u>Allergy</u>
Cough	Usually	Sometimes
General aches and pains	Sometimes	Never
Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes
Itchy eyes	Rarely	Usually
Sneezing	Usually	Usually
Sore throat	Usually	Sometimes
Runny nose	Usually	Usually
Stuffy nose	Usually	Usually
Fever	Rarely	Never

*Adapted from National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, 2008

Colds are caused by viruses, while seasonal allergies are immune system responses triggered by exposure to an allergen. Treatment of a common cold may include rest, pain relievers and over-the-counter cold remedies, such as decongestants. Treatment of seasonal allergies may include over-the-counter use of prescription antihistamines, nasal steroid sprays and decongestants, and avoidance of exposure to allergens where possible.

Treatment:

There is no real cure for seasonal allergies, but it is possible to relieve symptoms. Start by reducing or eliminating exposure to allergens. During allergy season, keep windows closed, use air conditioning if possible and change your air filter often.

At school we are keeping windows closed and reminding students to wash their hands and not touch their faces after coming in from outside. In the nurse's office, I can rinse eyes if necessary with water and give a cold wet towel to place on the eyes for comfort. If a child is having an extreme reaction they may stay inside, but this needs to be a temporary solution. ***A child may stay in for no more than 2-3 days with a note from the parent. If the child must stay inside for a longer time period, we will need a note from the doctor. It is important for children to have time to run and play outside.***

If reducing exposure to allergens isn't possible or is ineffective, medicines can help ease allergy symptoms. There are many non-drowsy antihistamines, nasal sprays and eye drops available as a prescription and over the counter. Many of these medicines can be taken at home once a day.

It helps to reduce the severity of symptoms by starting medication about a month before pollination occurs and to take medication regularly.

Please talk to your physician about what would be best for your child and remember that I need a consent form from the parent and a physician's order to give medications at school. The doctor can fax the order to me at 314-415-6611.

Be assured that I will call you if allergy/asthma symptoms are severe. A parent can always bring in medication and administer it to their child if needed.

Thank you,
Marilyn Perry, RN, BSN, NCSN
Pierremont Elementary School
School Nurse
314-415-6610