



The arrival of spring means the start of allergy season for over 23 million Americans. Before symptoms start – hello pollen-triggered runny nose, itchy, watery eyes, and sneezing fits – here are a few things you can do to prepare:

Declare your home an ‘allergy free’ zone: Minimizing the amount of pollen in the house will help keep allergies in check. Take your shoes off in the house; wash bedding and clothing often; vacuum floors and furniture; and change air/furnace filters to minimize airborne allergens.

Rethink your schedule: Pollen count is highest in the mornings between 5 and 10 a.m. Instead of walking the dog or working in the garden during those peak times, wait until later in the day.

Change the menu: Eating a healthy diet won't cure allergies but certain foods can provide relief. Research shows that foods like berries, peppers, onions, kiwi, and oranges can help with reactions to histamine. While the evidence is mixed on whether eating local honey can help reduce allergies, it can't hurt to add a little to your diet.

Be prepared: Certain allergens are more prevalent in certain regions of the country. If you're planning to travel this spring, pack antihistamines and tissues in case your allergies flare.

Hit the (clean) sheets: If you suffer from allergies, studies show that you're more likely to deal with insomnia, snoring, and feeling fatigued during allergy season. To keep allergies from affecting your sleep, try a nasal strip to open your airways. Try showering before bed and sleeping on clean sheets to reduce the number of allergens in the bedroom.

Consider “alternative” therapies: Studies show that acupuncture is effective for reducing allergy symptoms. If you're eager to find drug-free allergy relief, consider making an appointment with a licensed acupuncturist. Nasal rinses can also help ease allergy symptoms. Look for kits at the drugstore.

Get the right Rx: No one wants to spend the spring sniffing and sneezing. Before you reach for the nearest over-the-counter remedies, make an appointment with your doctor. There are several different medications to help manage your allergy symptoms. In some cases, an over-the-counter medication won't be strong enough to provide relief. Getting the right treatment is important for feeling better during allergy season.