



WRITING SAMPLE

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4 Strategies for Managing Seasonal Allergies

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Seasonal allergy sufferers know all too well the torment their bodies are subjected to at the whim of plants and trees, often for weeks or even months on end.

For the legions of people beset with symptoms such as stuffy or runny noses, itchy and watery eyes, and profuse sneezing, their top priority is relief. Let's look at some strategies for managing seasonal allergies.

Antihistamines

Many find these wonder drugs an effective antidote to the discomfort brought by pollen-based allergies. According to the Harvard Medical School, antihistamines “block histamine, an amino acid that makes blood vessels leaky and causes the allergy sufferer's runny nose and watery eyes.”

While some older antihistamines such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) and chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton) can cause grogginess and drowsiness, newer medications such as cetirizine (Zyrtec), desloratadine (Clarinet), fexofenadine (Allegra) and loratadine (Claritin) are less likely to result in suffers falling asleep during dinner.

Decongestants

For those with a perpetually blocked and stuffy nose, decongestants might be helpful. These drugs work by reducing the swelling of the blood vessels in the nose, and opening up the airways.

Decongestants are available as nasal sprays, tablets or capsules, and as liquids. Experts caution that decongestants shouldn't be taken for more than a week at a time, as prolonged use can cause the stuffiness symptoms to actually worsen.

Some allergy sufferers find relief by using medications that contain both an antihistamine and a decongestant.

Allergy shots

For some allergy sufferers, doctors may recommend allergen immunotherapy, commonly known as allergy shots. Though it may seem counterintuitive, allergy shots contain small amounts of the substance to which the patient is allergic, and are administered to the patient at regular intervals.

According to the Mayo Clinic: “Allergy shots contain just enough allergens to stimulate your immune system — but not enough to cause a full-blown allergic reaction.

Initial doses contain a minute amount of the allergen. Gradually, the amount of allergen in the shots increases. This “desensitizes” your body to the allergen, enabling your immune system to build up a tolerance to the pollen, or whatever causes your misery.

Stay inside

This is perhaps almost no one’s idea of fun, but there may be a day when the local weathercaster reports that pollen counts are particularly high, and you decide the best place to be is curled up on the couch with the TV remote and a box of tissues at the ready.

Keep doors and windows closed as much as possible, and be sure your HVAC filters are clean. You might need to invest in a vacuum cleaner with a high-efficiency particulate air filter. While you’re at it, you might look for a portable HEPA air purifier for your bedroom.

While we thank Mother Nature for the many green gifts she has bestowed upon our planet, some of us nevertheless curse her for the pollen her verdant beauty also provides. Seasonal allergies can be misery-making, but fortunately, there are steps we can take to combat these torments.

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