

# Spring Breezes, Allergy Sneezes



As temperatures rise and spring winds blow, something else might blow your child's way: seasonal allergies. Our Q&A offers some basic advice for determining if seasonal allergies are affecting your family.

by Kim Seidel

**Q: For allergies that only occur for very limited times, when do you consider it may be more than "just another cold," and does it matter if you treat it like a cold?**

**A:** Parents can distinguish between a cold and allergies by determining how long the symptoms last. A cold or another type of viral infection typically won't last more than two to four weeks.

If symptoms last a month or more, talk with your child's primary care doctor to determine if allergies are the cause, says Dr. Mary Morris, an allergy doctor with Allergy Associates in Onalaska.

If you do wind up treating a limited allergy like a cold, no harm done, Morris says. Of course, follow the dosing directions for any medicines you may use.

**Q: Sneezing, itching/watery eyes, and congestion are obvious symptoms of seasonal allergies. Are there other symptoms that aren't so blatant?**

**A:** Typically, sneezing and itching, watery eyes are the first symptoms to raise a red flag, causing parents to think their child may have

seasonal allergies. Yet there are several other symptoms to be on the lookout for, including headaches, says Morris. These headaches are usually frontal pain along the forehead and in the sinus area of your child's face, under his eyes and along his cheekbones. Children with allergies may be prone to sinus infections.

There also may be fluid buildup in the inner ear. Parents may notice their children aren't hearing as well as usual. "Some parents tell me they're getting annoyed because they feel their child is not listening to them," Morris says. "It may be an allergy symptom."

Another classic sign of an allergy is when a child tries to continually clear the back of the throat because it's itchy. It sounds like a "clucking" sound as they try to push air and cause pressure to feel like scratching on the throat.

Noticing dark circles under your child's eyes, known as "allergic shiners," is a clear allergy sign, Morris says. These "shiners" are often caused by nasal swelling.

Lack of sleep can be an additional side effect of allergies. "It's underappreciated how much allergies disrupt sleep," says Morris, pointing

out that a child won't likely realize how much allergies are waking him. The child often says he doesn't feel well, and it can come back to disrupted sleep.

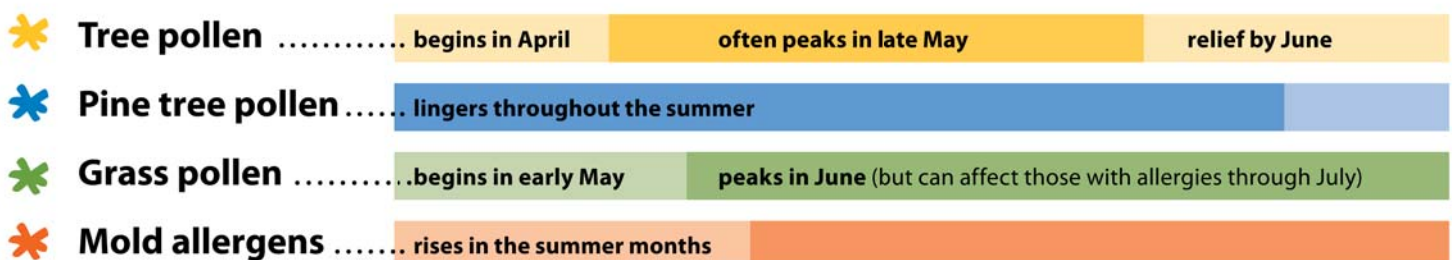
**Q: When do the seasonal allergies start occurring and what are the primary allergens in our area?**

**A:** Various allergens appear at different times throughout the year. Sometimes, it takes a little detective work to figure out what is causing your child's bothersome symptoms, plus your child could be allergic to more than one allergen.

In our region, the spring and summer months bring out symptoms of allergies to tree and grass pollens, as well as ragweed and molds.

Tree pollen starts in the spring as fresh plants begin to bloom. With the warmer winter weather in Wisconsin this year, the tree pollen may start earlier in April, says Morris, noting it is difficult to predict the allergy season. Tree pollen often peaks in late May and most children find relief from it by June.

Pine tree pollen, however, is one that can





linger throughout the summer. Pine trees are relatively easy to pick out, so a parent could likely decipher whether the backyard is the culprit behind a child's symptoms.

Grass pollen typically begins in early May, though it too could cause problems earlier than that due to the warm winter, according to Dr. Jim Thompson, a pediatric allergist at Allergy Associates. This pollen peaks in June, but can affect those with allergies through July.


Mold allergens also rise in the summer months. Mold spores are released into the air from grasses, leaves, and other vegetation, according to Thompson.

**Q: When should you consider that your child be treated with more than over-the-counter medications?**

**A:** For seasonal allergies, there are many good over-the-counter (OTC) antihistamines, such as Allegra, Claritin, and Zyrtec, that can help relieve your child's symptoms. Saline sinus rinses, also available OTC, are highly recommended by Thompson to ease sinus drainage and pain related to allergy symptoms.

After doing your detective work, following the pollen counts, and giving your child OTC medications, you may start to think your child is suffering from more than seasonal allergies. Perhaps the symptoms don't ease up throughout the year.


At this point, Morris recommends a visit to your child's primary care doctor to rule out infections or other problems. If allergies are still the main suspect, molds, dust mites, and pet dander are culprits causing allergy symptoms all year long.

Allergy Associates uses drops to help patients manage allergy symptoms. The antigens used in the allergy drops are the same as those used in allergy shots. People travel an average of 200 miles to Allergy Associates for treatment, known as sublingual (meaning under the tongue) immunotherapy. Unlike allergy medications that treat symptoms, the drops address underlying causes of allergies and help to prevent other allergies from occurring, Thompson says. 


Allergy Associates offers pollen counts from now until late fall at [www.lacrosseallergy.com](http://www.lacrosseallergy.com).

*Kim Seidel is a wife, mother of two daughters, and writer based in Onalaska.*

Read about  
*Expression Sessions - Baby born*  
[firstexpressionsphotography.blogspot.com](http://firstexpressionsphotography.blogspot.com)



infants children maternity families  
**FIRST EXPRESSIONS PHOTOGRAPHY**  
[www.firstexpressions.net](http://www.firstexpressions.net)  
608 779-9004  
Holmen, Wisconsin  
*Megan Seidel*



# Coulee Region Adult Day Center

**Now Open in Sparta!**



*To the world, you may be one person, to one person, you may be the world.*

Coulee Region Adult Day Center welcomes elderly and disabled clientele from various backgrounds. Our agency provides:

- overnight respite care in a home environment setting
- fun and stimulating activities with trained staff
- specialized care for your loved one

Choose Coulee Region Adult Day Center and treat yourself to a day off.

**(608) 519-2306**

1062 Oak Forest Dr.  
Suite 160, Onalaska  
413 Osborne Dr. Sparta

**HOURS:**  
Monday – Friday  
8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.