

Rising ragweed levels mean fall allergy season is near

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(HealthDay)—While some may think of scents like cinnamon or

pumpkin spice when the season turns to fall, others are breathing in something much less pleasant.

Autumn is also allergy season for those sensitive to ragweed.

"A spike in ragweed tends to mark the informal start of the fall [allergy season](#), which typically begins in mid-August," said Dr. Rachna Shah, an allergist with Loyola Medicine in Maywood, Ill. "This time of the year, we see less tree and grass allergens and more mold and weed allergens."

Shah, who oversees the Loyola Medicine Daily Allergy Count, shared some information and tips to help those whose allergies are emerging now.

Seasonal treatment protocols should begin as soon as possible, Shah advised. They can take a week or more to kick in. These include prescriptions, over-the-counter allergy medications and steroid nasal sprays.

"Allergy symptoms can worsen asthma, causing breathing difficulties, so it's important that you have all of your asthma tools," Shah said in a health system news release. "Make sure that your inhaler is up to date, not expired, that you have additional inhalers and refills on hand, and that you are taking preventive measures."

Keep windows closed on high allergy days and rinse off or change clothes after being outside. Modify activities on days when allergen levels are particularly high. Pollen counts are particularly high from dawn to 10 a.m., so shift outdoor activities to later in the day.

"Patients who are still suffering from [allergy symptoms](#) after adhering to their treatment protocols, taking [preventive measures](#) and/or modifying daily activities should be evaluated by a physician," Shah noted.

Symptoms of seasonal allergies include itchy eyes, itchy nose, sneezing, runny nose, [nasal congestion](#), headaches, ear itching or popping, postnasal drip and throat irritation. Some allergy symptoms mirror those of COVID-19, so seasonal allergy sufferers should be especially vigilant when adhering to treatment plans and precautions, Shah recommended.

"We saw some allergy symptoms overlapping with COVID-19 during the height of the pandemic last year, including congestion, [runny nose](#), headaches and throat irritation," said Shah. "As we face another spike in COVID-19, it's a good reminder to have your preventive [allergy](#) treatment plan in place."

More information: The Allergy & Asthma Network has more information on how to [distinguish your fall allergies from COVID-19](#).

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