

# Is It a Cold, Or Is It Allergies?

By Katie Waters  
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**S**o your nose is running, it itches, or else you're so stuffed up you can hardly breathe. Your eyes are watering, or maybe only one is watering, itchy, burning, or gritty. You have pressure in your face; your cheekbones hurt. Your eardrums feel like they are trying to push right out of your head. You have so much sinus drainage that you sound like the bass singer from the Oakridge Boys and you are usually a soprano. You are hacking and coughing on the crud that is draining down your throat. Where does this stuff come from? Do you start sneezing when you pass some one mowing their lawn? Some times you sound like Darth Vader when you breathe; other times you have hives, or just itchy skin.

Excuse me, it sounds like you have allergies!

"I've never had allergies in my life, why would they start now?" you ask. Excellent question! Allergies can start at any time from birth to the grave. Basically an allergy is your immune system gone on red alert. Your body sees a normal speck of dust or pollen or mold or whatever and feels threatened and starts fighting off this unwanted invader, making you feel like you are fighting off a bad cold. Your body is dumping histamine into your system trying to get rid of this foreign object that it finds offensive, but you didn't have this reaction last month or a year ago or last week. Why now?

Allergies often make their presence known after we have fought off an infection of a serious nature. The immune system then decides that normal things are out to get you. So your immune system goes into high gear to get rid of the foreign matter before it can multiply and set up an infection. Your body produces mucus to flush out the offending matter, lots of mucus! Your body is only trying to protect you. That being the case, you feel like you could use a little less protection.

What you need to do is find out what it is that you are allergic to. Your doctor should be able to help you. Once you have found the cause of the allergic reaction, then you can take appropriate action including either avoidance or preventative measures, or a combination of both.

Often the time of year will help you narrow down the type of allergy. In the spring it could be tree, grass or flower pollen, summer mold, grasses, or weeds, in the fall ragweed or mold. Ragweed season runs from mid August until the killing frost. In winter, you have pet dander, mold, or dust. If you are miserable all year round it could be multiple allergies, or a food allergy, or you could be allergic to chemicals that are used in everyday products. When outdoors try a face mask with a filter in it.

Do you wake up in the morning all stuffed up?

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Probably an allergy to dust, (more accurately dust mite feces), a few easy things to try is keep the bedroom well dusted, change your pillow if it is more than 3 years old, 1/3 of the weight of a pillow can be from dust mite feces. Yuck! Vacuum the mattress to remove the dead skin that dust mites love or get a bed sack one of the plastic bags with a zipper for your mattress. Wash curtains or dust mini-blinds. Minimize dust collectors, figurines, books, etc. Vacuum regularly or remove carpets and go with a wood floor.

Pollen from trees, grasses, weeds and so forth come to us on the wind. Pollen is generally light and floats in the air currents, sometimes hundreds of miles. For those of us with allergies it is a nuisance but we wouldn't want to be without the different pollens that keep the beautiful plants in abundance in our colorful world. Without pollen we would soon be in a barren world.

Staying indoors with the windows closed during high pollen or mold times is a good idea, but most of us are not free to be hermits when the pollen count is high, we have to go to work or take care of other responsibilities. Even when you stay indoors with the windows closed and the air conditioner on pollen still gets into the living area, some comes in on clothing when anyone has been outside, still more will come in around windows and doors, or garage doors that are not perfectly air tight, if you have a pet some comes in with them when they

come in from taking care of their business. This being the case what is then needed is a true negative ion generator that will make the particles of mold, dust, pet dander and pollen that you see floating in a sunbeam become heavy and drop to the ground or floor where they can be swept or wiped up. Ionizers are available for indoor use or for your vehicle. Once the allergens are out of the air you will not be breathing them in and your allergy symptoms should improve. You will still need to keep your windows closed because an ionizer can not keep up with the great outdoors, it can keep up with the indoors if you limit the amount of pollen that gets into your home. If you have central heat and air you can get air purifiers to take care of the whole house. These are available at <http://www.negative-ion-generators.com>.

Allergies can take the joy out of living, but you don't have to let them! Do your homework. Read up on allergies and what can be done for them. Go ahead and smell the roses, but leave the ragweed alone. It helps if you know what the things you are allergic to look like. You may have a patch of ragweed growing in your back yard and not even know it. See the article on ragweed for more information. So arm yourself with knowledge and protect yourself and your loved ones from the miseries of allergies.