

# Health Tips for Parents

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## Does my child have seasonal allergies?

Seasonal allergies, sometimes called “hay fever” can cause cold-like symptoms in children, such as sneezing, congestion, runny nose and itchy eyes. If these symptoms occur at the same time every year, your child may have seasonal allergies.



**Allergens** “Seasonal allergies can start at almost any age. Environmental, lifestyle and genetics are all factors that play a role in why some children have allergies and others don’t. There is no one reason,”



notes Maria Garcia-Lloret, M.D, pediatric allergy/immunology and rheumatology specialist at Mattel Children’s Hospital UCLA.

A myriad of particles/substances can act as allergens and trigger the symptoms. Common indoor allergens include dust mite, cockroach, pet dander and some molds while outdoor allergens include trees, grass, weed pollen and other molds. Patients who are allergic to indoor allergens tend to be symptomatic year-round, while those who are allergic to pollens develop symptoms almost exclusively during the pollen season.

When children who are allergic come in contact with these allergens, their bodies release chemicals, including histamine, into the bloodstream to defend against them. It’s the release of these chemicals that causes the discomfort of allergy symptoms.

**Diagnosis** Seasonal allergies are not a simple nuisance. “If left untreated, allergies can noticeably impair a child’s ability to learn and play,” says Dr. Garcia-Lloret. A child with a runny nose and itchy eyes is usually restless and does not pay attention. Severe nasal congestion usually leads to trouble sleeping and daytime sleepiness or inattentiveness. In severe cases, allergies can also cause an asthma attack.

Talk with your doctor if you think your child might have allergies. Based on what the child’s symptoms are and a physical exam, the doctor should be able to make a diagnosis. If not, the he or she may refer you to an allergist for blood or allergy skin tests.

### Signs and Symptoms

Allergy symptoms, which usually come on suddenly and last as long as a person is exposed to a particular allergen, can include:

- sneezing
- itchy nose and/or throat
- nasal congestion
- clear, runny nose
- coughing
- itchy, watery, and/or red eyes



## Help Relieve Symptoms

There is no real cure for seasonal allergies, but it is possible to relieve symptoms by reducing or eliminating exposure to allergens. “If reducing exposure isn’t possible or is ineffective, decongestants, antihistamines, nasal spray steroids or leukotriene inhibitors may help alleviate symptoms.

This information is provided courtesy of the pediatricians at Mattel Children’s Hospital UCLA. UCLA Health System pediatricians are conveniently located in your neighborhood. In addition to our Children’s Health Center in Westwood, we have offices in Brentwood, Manhattan Beach, Santa Monica and West Los Angeles. All health and health-related information contained in this publication is intended to be general in nature and should not be used as a substitute for a visit with a healthcare professional.