



Five Surprising Triggers

Five Surprising Allergy & Asthma Triggers That Can Spoil Summer Fun

Rather than lazy, hazy and crazy, summer can be sneezy, itchy and wheezy for those with allergy and asthma. Millions of Americans are allergic to grass pollen, a trigger from late spring to early summer. But suffering also may be caused by unexpected triggers, such as sunscreen, campfires or changes in the weather.

“Summer is full of allergy and asthma triggers that many people are unaware of,” said allergist Linda B. Ford, M.D., of The Asthma and Allergy Center. “If you are vigilant to avoid them and treat your condition, it can mean the difference between a great summer and a miserable one.”

Following are a few surprising summer allergy and asthma triggers, as well as some suggestions for coping with them, courtesy of Dr. Ford and the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI).

- Sunscreen.** It’s a bit of a catch 22 - sunscreen protects your skin from the damaging rays of the sun, but may cause an allergic reaction in some people. If you get a rash after slathering up, you may be having a photoallergic reaction to ingredients common in many sunscreens. Lotions that contain zinc oxide and titanium dioxide usually are safe bets, but some people do not like them because they are visible on the skin - think of the lifeguard’s coated white nose. An Asthma & Allergy Center Physician can run tests to learn what ingredients you should avoid.
- Summer fruits and veggies.** If your lips start tingling soon after you sink your teeth into a juicy peach - or melon, tomato, celery or orange - you may have oral allergy syndrome. People with pollen allergy can suffer from this condition, which is a cross-reaction between similar proteins in certain fruits and vegetables and the allergy-causing pollen. The simple solution is to avoid the offending food, or just put up with the annoying but short-lived (and seldom dangerous) reaction. In rare cases, the problem can cause a life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis. See an Asthma & Allergy Center Physician to determine whether you should carry portable epinephrine.
- Changes in the weather.** Be it stifling humidity or a refreshing cool breeze, sudden changes in the weather can trigger an asthma attack. See an Asthma & Allergy Center Clinician to discuss an

Asthma Action Plan and to be sure you are keeping your asthma in check no matter the season or the temperature.

- Campfire smoke.**Toasting marshmallows or sitting out at a bonfire is a lot less fun if it results in an asthma attack or allergic reaction. Smoke is a common asthma trigger, and some folks are allergic to the pollen of the wood being burned, such as mesquite. If you don't want to miss out, sit upwind of the smoke and avoid getting too close.

- Stinging insects.** As if the pain isn't bad enough, you can develop a life-threatening allergic reaction to the sting of bees, wasps, hornets and fire ants, even if a previous sting only caused a mild reaction such as a rash. Cover up when gardening or working outdoors, avoid brightly colored clothing, forget the perfume and take caution when eating or drinking anything sweet, all of which attract stinging insects. Ask an Asthma & Allergy Center Clinician if you should carry portable epinephrine just in case you are stung.

An Asthma and Allergy Center Physician can perform allergy testing to determine the source of your misery and help you find relief. Visit www.AllergyAndAsthmaRelief.org to learn more about summer allergies.