



"Your Local
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Keeping Your Seasonal Allergies in Check

Coldwater, MI. Though it may (or may not, depending on the day) feel like winter, spring is just around the corner, which means the seasonal allergies are sure to follow! The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to help you prepare for the sneeziest time of the year for so many people. According to the CDC, more than 50 million Americans suffer from allergies each year. Allergies are an overreaction of the immune system to substances that generally do not affect other individuals. These substances, or allergens, can cause sneezing, coughing, and itching. Allergic reactions range from merely bothersome to life-threatening. For most people, seasonal allergies like hay fever and pollen, for example, are just bothersome. Here are a few ways to help combat the stuffy, runny noses for the next few months.

- **Reduce your exposure to allergy triggers**
 - Stay indoors on dry, windy days. The best time to go outside is after a good rain, which helps clear pollen from the air.
 - Delegate lawn mowing, weed pulling and other gardening chores that stir up allergens.
 - Remove clothes you've worn outside and shower to rinse pollen from your skin and hair.
 - Don't hang laundry outside — pollen can stick to sheets and towels.
 - Wear a pollen mask if you do outside chores.
- **Take extra steps when pollen counts are high**

- Check your local TV or radio station, your local newspaper, or the Internet for pollen forecasts and current pollen levels.
- If high pollen counts are forecasted, start taking allergy medications before your symptoms start.
- Close doors and windows at night or any other time when pollen counts are high.
- Avoid outdoor activity in the early morning when pollen counts are highest.
- **Keep indoor air clean**
 - Use the air conditioning in your house and car.
 - If you have forced air heating or air conditioning in your house, use high-efficiency filters and follow regular maintenance schedules.
 - Keep indoor air dry with a dehumidifier.
 - Use a portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter in your bedroom.
 - Clean floors often with a vacuum cleaner that has a HEPA filter.
- **Try an over-the-counter remedy**
 - Oral antihistamines. Antihistamines can help relieve sneezing, itching, a runny nose and watery eyes.
 - Decongestants. Oral decongestants such as pseudoephedrine can provide temporary relief from nasal stuffiness. Decongestants also come in nasal sprays. Only use nasal decongestants for a few days in a row. Longer-term use of decongestant nasal sprays can actually worsen symptoms.
 - Nasal spray. Nasal spray can ease allergy symptoms and doesn't have serious side effects, though it's most effective when you begin using it before your symptoms start.

For more information on seasonal allergies, visit www.cdc.gov. Be sure to check out our website at www.bhsj.org and our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/bhsjwic.

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