

# I Sneezed: Spring Allergy or COVID?

## ❑ Do I need a COVID test if my nose is stuffy from allergy? by Doug Puder, MD

Sneezing, runny nose, itchy red eyes, and itchy throat are typical allergy symptoms. It's a springtime "cold" without fever that "just won't go away". We'll discuss if your child needs a COVID test to be cautious. Spring allergies usually affect more than just one family member. Infants and toddlers can have food allergies, but springtime allergy is uncommon before age 3. Runny noses of infants and toddlers are usually from viruses because it takes several seasons of pollen exposure before spring allergy develops. Luckily, most allergies today can be controlled, and suffering greatly reduced. Tree pollen is highest in April/May. Grass pollen peaks in June...

## ❑ What are the Steps to treat springtime allergy?

### Step 1

Start with a Non-Drowsy Antihistamine

These are all OTC now! Available as pills-liquids-meltaways-chewables:



- Loratadine (*Claritin/Alavert*)
- Fexofenadine (*Allegra*)
- Cetirizine (*Zyrtec*)
- Levocetirizine (*Xyzal*) (*less sedating than cetirizine*)
- Diphenhydramine (*Benadryl*) (*very sedating-use at bedtime*)

If that doesn't give enough relief, time for step 2. Add a **cortisone** nasal spray to reduce nasal inflammation. Studies show nasal cortisone sprays all work equally well. Many are OTC now:

### Step 2

Add a Nasal Cortisone Spray



Use 1-2 sprays each nostril for the first week, then decrease to one spray daily. Continue until pollen levels drop:

- OTC: ● **Flonase** ● **Nasocort** ● **Rhinocort**  
Rx: ● **Fluticasone** (generic Flonase)

### Step 3

Add Allergy Eyedrops



If the eyes are still itchy, use one drop in each eye. Most are OTC:

- **Pataday** (once daily) ● **Pazeo** (high strength Pataday) ● **Zaditor** (3x daily) ● **Ketotifen** (generic zaditor)
- **Olopatadine** (generic pataday/pazeo)

### Step 4

Time to see an Allergist?

● **Montelukast** (*Singulair*), ● **Azelastine** (*Astelin*) and others may add a little more relief. But if your child or teen is still miserable after steps 1,2,3 we recommend testing by an allergist. *Immunotherapy* (allergy shots) or daily drops under the tongue (sublingual) can make a huge difference. The benefits should be long lasting, and often "life changing"!



It also helps to track pollen levels with one of many free apps. It helps to change clothes (and masks) when coming indoors. If you have contact lenses, switch to glasses until pollen levels drop. Think about running an air conditioner or *HEPA* filter. Make an appointment and we'll guide you!

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