



Your guide to seasonal allergy relief

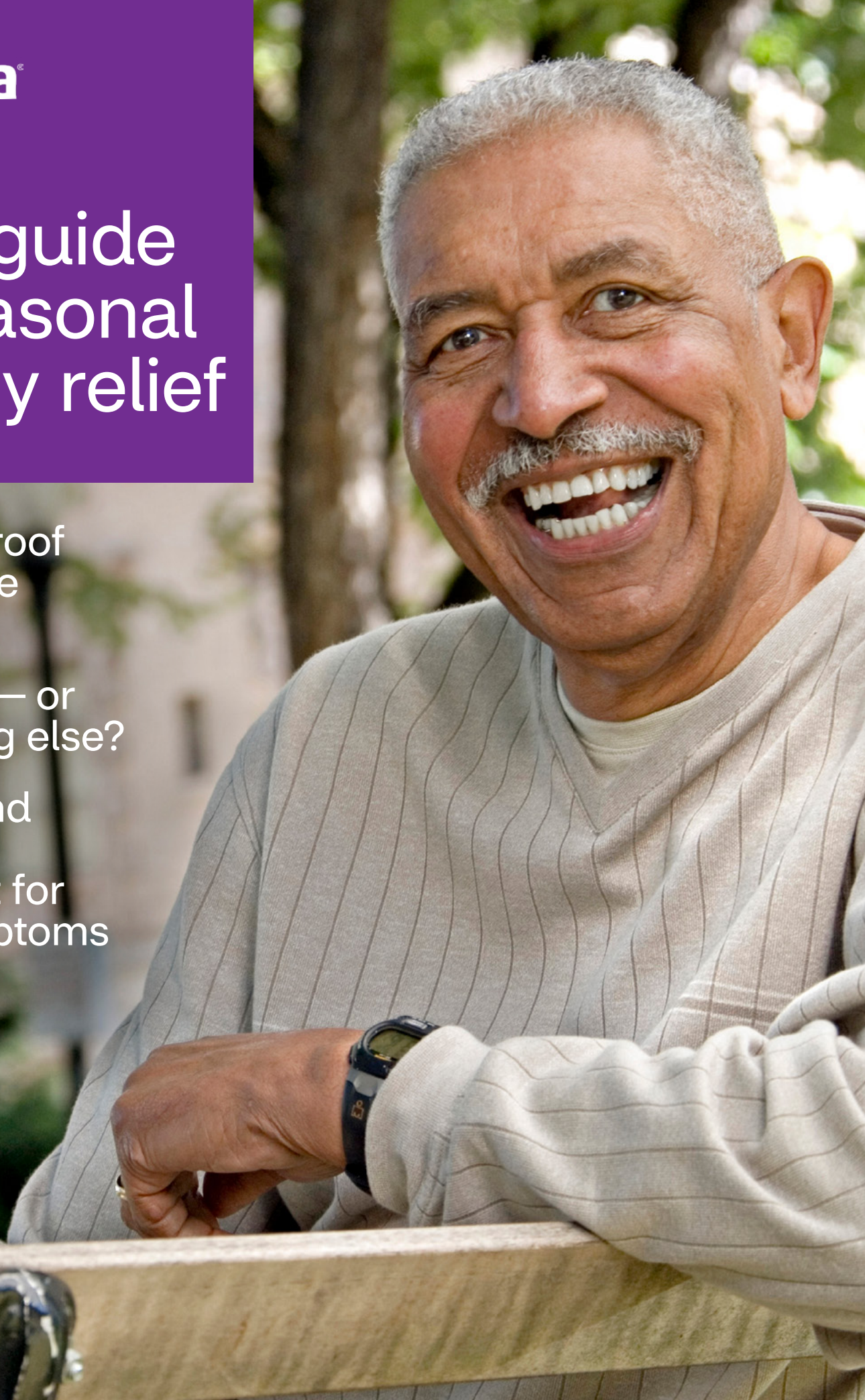
Allergy-proof
your home

Is it really
allergies — or
something else?

How to find
the best
treatment for
your symptoms



What to
eat to beat
allergies
naturally



Allergy-proof your home

Nearly 20 million Americans suffer from seasonal allergies, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.* “Typical symptoms of hay fever include sneezing, a runny or stuffy nose, a tickly throat and itchy eyes,” says William Harris, MD, an allergist with Providence St. Joseph Hospital in Orange County, CA. To lower your contact with allergens, use this guide to allergy-proof every area of your home.



Front door

Leave your shoes by the front door. That way you won't track in pollen, grass and other allergens.



Back door

Give your dog or cat a quick wipe-down with a damp towel to remove pollen when they come in from the yard.



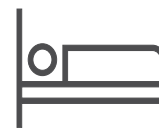
Living room

Close your windows. If you have an air conditioner or dehumidifier, turn it on. And aim to vacuum at least once a week. This will help clear the air of allergens.



Bathroom

Take a shower and wash your hair at the end of the day to remove any pollen. (Bonus: The steam from your shower can help loosen any mucus in your sinuses.)



Bedroom

Wrap your pillows, mattress and box spring with zippered, dust-proof covers. This will help keep dust mites, a common indoor allergen, away from your skin.

Also, don't use feather pillows and bedding. Dust mites like them, so use poly-fill or foam instead. Wash sheets and blankets every 1-2 weeks in warm or hot water.



Kitchen

Wash dishes daily and wipe up damp areas to stop mold from growing on food and surfaces. And throw out moldy or expired food.



Laundry area

Change your clothes when you come in from outside. Drop them in the hamper or wash them right away.

* FOR STATISTIC ON ALLERGIES SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Allergies and hay fever. September 6, 2022. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/allergies.htm>. Accessed March 7, 2024.



Breathe easy outdoors

You don't have to stay locked up indoors to get through allergy season. Try these simple tricks to keep allergies in check when you head outside.

- ✔ Wear a mask or a loose scarf around your nose and mouth so you don't breathe in tree and grass allergens.
- ✔ Don't go outdoors in the morning — that's when pollen counts tend to be high. Also, stay inside on windy days, when pollen gets blown around.
- ✔ Go outside after it rains, when allergens are temporarily washed away.
- ✔ When pollen counts are high, don't do outside work like sweeping, trimming grass or plants or pulling weeds.
- ✔ Keep car windows rolled up. Set your car air conditioning to "recirculate." That keeps your car cool by moving the inside air around instead of pulling in outside air that might carry pollen.



ALLERGEN ALERT!

For daily pollen forecasts in your area, download a pollen tracker app. To find one, search "pollen" in your smartphone's app store. You can also check out the daily national allergy map at [Pollen.com](https://www.pollen.com) or tune into your favorite local weather report.

Annual allergy calendar

“Hay fever doesn’t just happen in the springtime. Allergies happen all year and in every area of the country,” says allergist Harris. Here’s a month-by-month guide to what’s likely causing your allergy symptoms. Knowing what’s making you feel sick makes it easier to stay away from triggers.



March
through
July

Common allergens:
tree pollen, grass pollen,
flowers, mold spores,
fungus spores

This is when trees and plants start to bloom, and their pollen explodes in most regions of the country.

Around July, fungus spores and seeds and mold spores begin to appear. They might be to blame for your allergies, especially in humid climates.

August
through
October

Common allergens:
mold spores, fungus spores,
ragweed, goldenrod,
sagebrush, falling leaves

The mold and fungus spores that thrive in humid summer months are still around. But fall’s ragweed, goldenrod and sagebrush pollen are also starting to bloom.

Ragweed is especially heavy in the Northeast and Midwest. Fallen leaves that sit in large, damp piles for days at a time collect ragweed and dust. They’re also a hot spot for mold.

November
through
February

Common allergens:
mold spores, pet dander,
dust mites

The cooler the weather, the more time you’re likely to spend indoors. That’s when dust, indoor mold and pet dander can become trouble. In December, a live indoor Christmas tree can cause an evergreen allergy. Choose a fake tree if you’re allergic.

If you’re sensitive to scents or smoke, both of which can cause allergies, choose flameless candles over real ones. When February arrives, tree pollen may start to pop up in warmer parts of the country.

Is it really allergies?

It can be hard to tell whether to blame allergies for your runny nose and sneezing, or a common cold, sinusitis, COVID-19 or even the flu. For help finding the cause of your symptoms, check out the chart below. You can also contact your provider. Or you can call our 24/7 Nurse Line at **1-866-409-1221 (TTY: 711)**.



	Allergy	Cold	Sinusitis	COVID-19	Flu
Cough	X	X	X	X	X
Nasal congestion	X	X	X	X	
Runny nose	X	X	X	X	X
Sore throat		X		X	X
Fever			X	X	X
Muscle aches				X	X
Nausea/vomiting				X	X
Sneezing	X	X			
Itchy eyes/nose	X				
Sinus pressure/headache			X		
Loss of smell				X	
Diarrhea				X	X
Tiredness			X	X	X

Find relief fast

“There’s no shortage of over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription allergy medicines out there,” says allergist Harris. Antihistamines, decongestants, nasal sprays, allergy eye drops, saline sprays/washes and even certain foods can help relieve allergy symptoms. Talk to your provider about which might be best for you.

1

Antihistamines

This OTC medicine stops your immune system from releasing too many histamines. (Histamines are the chemicals in your body that cause allergy symptoms when you come in contact with an allergen.) Antihistamines come in tablet, liquid and nasal spray form.

✔ **Good to know** Many antihistamines cause drowsiness. But there are new ones that are less likely to make you sleepy. Always check the package for possible side effects before taking any medicine.

2

Eye drops

Prescription eye-drop medications prevent the allergic response in the eyes. They help reduce itching, tearing, swelling and redness.

✔ **Good to know** Side effects can include dry eye, burning and blurred vision.

3

Nose spray

Nasal sprays are very effective treatments for allergy symptoms. You can get them both over-the-counter and by prescription.

✔ **Good to know** Nasal sprays work best when they are used daily, with peak results typically after two to four weeks.

4

Decongestants

Decongestants ease nasal congestion by shrinking swollen tissue and blood vessels. They can be taken in pill form

or as a nasal spray. You can take them with antihistamines for faster relief.

✔ **Good to know** Oral decongestants can sometimes cause nervousness. Talk to your doctor if you have any bothersome side effects.

5

Prescription medicines

Prescription medicines can ease seasonal allergy symptoms such as sneezing, nasal congestion and irritated eyes.

✔ **Good to know** If your symptoms are not getting better with daily OTC medication, talk to your doctor. There are many prescription options available.

6

Saline wash

These can help remove mucus and pollen from your nose.

✔ **Good to know** Saline sprays and washes are basically water and salt. You can use them as often as you want to get relief.



Aetna® Dual Eligible Special Needs Plan (D-SNP) members get an Extra Benefits Card with monthly allowances they can use to help pay for certain everyday expenses like select over-the-counter (OTC) items.

Visit [AetnaMedicare.com/DSNPInfo](https://www.aetna.com/medicare/dsnpinfo) to learn more about the benefits of having an Aetna D-SNP.

Eat to beat allergies

Certain foods have natural properties that can help make allergy season a bit more bearable. Add these foods to your shopping list and you might feel better.

Berries

They have quercetin, which may lower allergic reactions.

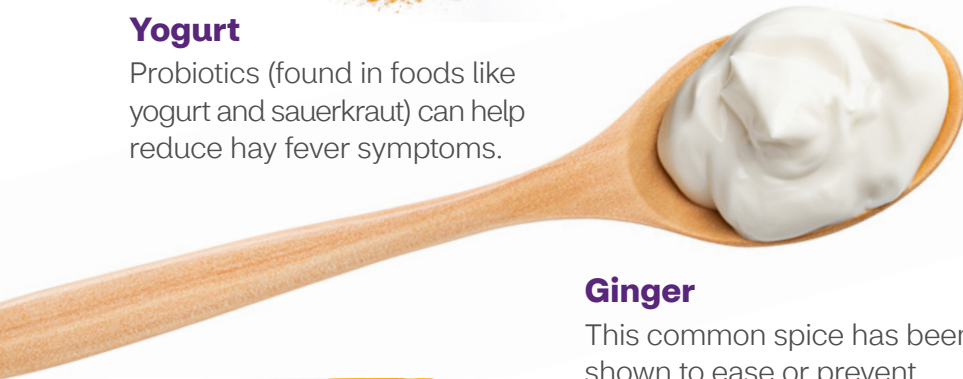


Turmeric

This yellow spice has anti-inflammatory properties, which may ease swollen nasal passages.

Yogurt

Probiotics (found in foods like yogurt and sauerkraut) can help reduce hay fever symptoms.



Ginger

This common spice has been shown to ease or prevent seasonal allergy symptoms.



Citrus fruits

Most citrus fruits have an anti-inflammatory, antihistamine effect. Just be sure to check with your doctor before eating grapefruit if you're taking any medication, whether it's OTC or prescription.

Allergy-busting berry smoothie

This creamy, nutrient-filled smoothie tastes great, fills you up — and may make allergy season a bit easier.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup plain yogurt

½ tsp. cinnamon

½ tsp. ground ginger

1 cup frozen strawberries, raspberries or blueberries

2 oz. orange juice

1 tbsp. honey (or to taste)

DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.

Having an Aetna Dual Eligible Special Needs Plan, or D-SNP, means you get an Extra Benefits Card with monthly allowances that can be used to help pay for certain healthy foods like fruits, vegetables and dairy products. Visit [AetnaMedicare.com/DSNPInfo](https://www.aetna.com/DSNPInfo) to learn more about Aetna D-SNPs. Or call 1-833-771-3597 (TTY: 711).

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- Free aids and services to people with disabilities to help them communicate better, such as:
 - ✓ Qualified sign language interpreters
 - ✓ Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
 - ✓ Qualified interpreters
 - ✓ Information written in other languages

If you need these services, contact *Aetna Medicare Preferred Plan (HMO D-SNP)* between 8 AM and 8 PM 7 days a week by calling **1-860-409-1221**. If you cannot hear or speak well, please call **711**. Upon request, this document can be made available to you in braille, large print, audiocassette or electronic form. To obtain a copy in one of these alternative formats, please call or write to:

Aetna Medicare Preferred Plan (HMO D-SNP)
Aetna Medicare, PO Box 7405, London, KY 40742
1-860-409-1221 [TTY/TDD 711] [California Relay 711]

HOW TO FILE A GRIEVANCE

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- By phone: Contact *Aetna Medicare Grievances* between 8 AM and 8 PM, 7 days a week, by calling **1-866-409-1221**. Or, if you cannot hear or speak well, please call **[TTY/TDD 711]**.
- In writing: Fill out a complaint form or write a letter and send it to:
Aetna Medicare Grievances
PO Box 14834 Lexington, KY 40512
- In person: Visit your doctor's office or *Aetna Medicare Preferred Plan (HMO D-SNP)* and say you want to file a grievance.
- Electronically: Visit *Aetna Medicare Preferred Plan (HMO D-SNP)* website at AetnaMedicare.com

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS – CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the California Department of Health Care Services, Office of Civil Rights by phone, in writing, or electronically:

- By phone: Call **916-440-7370**. If you cannot speak or hear well, please call **711** (Telecommunications Relay Service).
- In writing: Fill out a complaint form or send a letter to:
Deputy Director, Office of Civil Rights
Department of Health Care Services
Office of Civil Rights
P.O. Box 997413, MS 0009
Sacramento, CA 95899-7413

Complaint forms are available at http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/Language_Access.aspx.

- Electronically: Send an email to CivilRights@dhcs.ca.gov.

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS – U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

If you believe you have been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex, you can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights by phone, in writing or electronically:

- By phone: Call **1-800-368-1019**.
If you cannot speak or hear well, please call **TTY/TDD 1-800-537-7697**.
- In writing: Fill out a complaint form or send a letter to:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201

Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

- Electronically: Visit the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>.

If you speak a language other than English, free language assistance services are available. Visit our website or call the phone number listed in this document. (English)

Si habla un idioma que no sea inglés, se encuentran disponibles servicios gratuitos de asistencia de idiomas. Visite nuestro sitio web o llame al número de teléfono que figura en este documento. (Spanish)

如果您使用英文以外的語言，我們將提供免費的語言協助服務。請瀏覽我們的網站或撥打本文件中所列的電話號碼。(Traditional Chinese)

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