

Pollen allergies can be tough on kids, especially during allergy season, which typically spans from March to June in Northern Virginia.

Here are some practical steps for parents to help prevent and treat pollen allergies:

### **Prevention Tips:**

#### **1. Monitor Pollen Counts:**

- Stay updated on local pollen forecasts (available through weather apps or websites). On high pollen days, limit outdoor activities, especially during peak pollen times (early morning to late afternoon). You may let your child go outside right after it rains.

#### **2. Keep Windows Closed:**

- Keep windows in the house, car, and school closed during high pollen seasons to prevent pollen from coming inside.

#### **3. Use Air Purifiers:**

- Use HEPA air filters in bedrooms and living areas. Consider a HEPA filter in the child's room, as this can reduce indoor allergens.

#### **4. Change Clothes and Shower After Outdoor Activities:**

- After being outside, have your child change clothes in the laundry room (not in his/her bedroom) and take a shower immediately to remove pollen that may have settled on skin and hair. Wash eyes with cold water to get rid of any pollen stuck inside the eyes.

#### **5. Keep Pets Clean:**

- If your child has pets, make sure to wash them frequently, as they can carry pollen on their fur.

#### **6. Avoid Yard Work:**

- Avoid having your child play or help with yard work during peak pollen times. If yard work must be done, ensure they are indoors during that time.

#### **7. Use Sunglasses or Hats:**

- Have your child wear sunglasses or a hat when outdoors to prevent pollen from getting in their eyes and causing irritation, and contaminate their hair.

### **Treatment Options:**

#### **1. Antihistamines:**

- Over-the-counter antihistamines like Allegra, cetirizine (Zyrtec), loratadine (Claritin), or diphenhydramine (i.e. Benadryl but at night only if supplemental meds needed. It causes drowsiness) can help relieve symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose, or itchy eyes. Always check with a pediatrician if the above is not helping

#### **2. Nasal Sprays:**

- Saline nasal sprays or rinses can help clear out pollen from the nasal passages. Steroid nasal sprays (e.g., fluticasone) can also be helpful for severe allergy symptoms. These should be used under guidance from a doctor.

**3. Eye Drops:**

- Antihistamine eye drops can be used to alleviate itchy, watery eyes, a common symptom of pollen allergies. Pataday, Alaway etc.

**4. Decongestants:**

- If your child is experiencing nasal congestion, a pediatrician may recommend a decongestant. These should only be used for short periods and under medical advice.

**5. Allergy Shots (Immunotherapy):**

- For persistent and severe symptoms, a pediatric allergist may recommend allergy shots to help desensitize your child to pollen over time.

**6. Hydration and Humidity:**

- Keeping your child hydrated can help thin mucus and ease congestion. A humidifier in the bedroom may help keep the air moist and reduce nasal irritation.

**When to See a doctor:**

- If your child has severe or persistent allergy symptoms, such as trouble breathing, wheezing, or an allergic reaction, it's important to consult with a pediatrician or allergist. They may recommend testing to identify specific allergens and provide a treatment plan.

By staying proactive, keeping an eye on environmental triggers, and having a treatment plan in place, you can help minimize the impact of pollen allergies on your child's health and comfort.