

Ragweed Tumbles in

For many, August signals the end of summer.

But for millions of Americans, the month marks the beginning of ragweed season – and with it another battle against sneezing, itchy eyes, runny noses and congestion.

Ragweed is abundant in the Northeast, Midwest and South from mid-August through the first frost, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI). The weed grows in fields and roadside ditches, but also thrives in urban areas such as vacant lots.

Allergy shots are an effective treatment in up to 90 percent of patients.



Avoid exposure

The AAAAI estimates that 36 million Americans suffer from seasonal allergies. Ragweed is the No. 1 cause of fall allergies.

An allergist/immunologist can diagnose and treat ragweed and other allergies, enhancing quality-of-life for those who suffer.

The AAAAI offers these tips for minimizing exposure to ragweed:

- Keep windows closed to keep pollen from drifting into your home. Use the air conditioner, which filters, cools and dries air.
- Stay indoors when pollen counts are highest, typically between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Oral allergy syndrome

Many individuals with ragweed allergy also have symptoms when eating certain fresh fruits and vegetables. Oral allergy syndrome (OAS) can also cause itchiness and mild swelling around the mouth.

OAS occurs when the body confuses the proteins in these foods with similar ones in ragweed. Common foods that trigger OAS in people with ragweed allergy include bananas, cucumbers, zucchinis, melons, chamomile, sunflower seeds and Echinacea.

DID YOU KNOW?

Each ragweed plant produces 1 billion pollen grains in an average season. With help from the wind, the grains can travel up to 400 miles.

- Check daily pollen counts for your area at www.aaaai.org/nab.

- Change your clothing after time spent outdoors and avoid drying laundry outside.

- Sleep well by taking a shower before bed to wash away pollen that's accumulated on or near your head – and will otherwise wind up on your pillow.

Visit the AAAAI Web site, www.aaaai.org.

www.aaaai.org/patients for additional information on ragweed allergy and oral allergy syndrome.

To the Point

- Ragweed is common in most regions of the United States and is the primary cause of fall allergy symptoms.
- Many individuals with ragweed allergy also experience symptoms while eating certain fresh fruits and vegetables. Common triggers include bananas, cucumber and melon.
- Avoid ragweed exposure by keeping car and home windows closed and staying indoors during high pollen counts.
- Visit the National Allergy Bureau (NAB) at www.aaaai.org/nab for daily pollen counts.

An allergist/immunologist is the best-qualified medical expert to diagnose and treat allergies. To find an allergist/immunologist near you, visit the physician referral directory at www.aaaai.org.

For more information on ragweed allergy, please visit the Patients & Consumers Center of the AAAAI Web site, www.aaaai.org.



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