

# Summer sneezes: Spring's end signals start of allergy suffering for some El Pasoans

[By Victor R. Martinez \ EL PASO TIMES](#)

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Dr. Jose Venzor examined Sgt. Maj. Jose Villarreal at Venzor's eastside offices Friday. (vc)



EL PASO -- Jackie Marquez loves summer.

It's the time of year for camping in Ruidoso, picnics at Memorial Park and backyard barbecues.

The next three months can also be a curse for the Eastsider, who also must contend with itchy skin, watery red eyes, constant sneezing, coughing and postnasal drip.

"Summer is my favorite time of the year, but I also have to be careful," Marquez said. "Most people are done with their allergy problems. Unfortunately, I am not."

Besides contending with the heat, people with summer allergies may face a combination of pollens and unclean air-conditioner filters that can bring on continuing misery.

"Spring is the most intense season of the year in El Paso," said Dr. Joe Venzor III of Southwest Allergy & Asthma Associates at 10501 Vista Del Sol. "Summer takes a back seat. The trees stop pollinating in June. The last tree that pollinates is the willow, so sometimes in June people will get those willow allergies."

When people think of allergies, many equate spring and autumn with red eyes, runny noses and tissue boxes. But as many sufferers know too well, the end of spring does not mean the end of discomfort.

"People will be watering and cutting their grass," Venzor said. "Depending on the temperature and rainfall, some years we can have significant amounts of bermuda pollen in the air."

At least one out of five Americans suffers from allergies. Allergic disorders are the sixth-leading cause of chronic illness in the United States, according to the Allergy Report from the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.

Common causes of allergy symptoms include food allergies to peanuts or milk, and seasonal allergies resulting from grass, weed or tree pollens or from various molds.

The allergy culprits vary from season to season. In early spring, the pollens of budding trees (such as birch, poplar, walnut, sycamore, oak and ash) produce the symptoms typically associated with allergies. In the spring, discomfort is usually triggered by the pollens of such grasses as sweet vernal, bermuda, timothy and redtop.

"Grass loves rain," Venzor said. "It really produces more pollen whenever we have an early monsoon. We also see a large amount of mold."

Alternaria mold is the most common in El Paso.

"Alternaria grows in the soil and breaks down decaying plant matter," Venzor said. "So when you cut the grass, you get a large amount of alternaria and a couple of other molds in the air, so if you are mold-sensitive, that could affect you, too."

An allergy is an overreaction of the immune system to a substance that's harmless to most people. But in someone with an allergy, the body's immune system treats the substance (called an allergen) as an invader and reacts inappropriately, resulting in symptoms that can range from annoying to harmful.

"Your body thinks that all these pollens and mold spores are floating through the air like foreign invaders," Venzor said. "Your body thinks it's a bacteria and produces antibodies against these pollens. Once you have these antibodies in there, once you inhale the pollen, these antibodies cross-link the allergen, and that's what causes the white cells to release histamine."

The histamine triggers the runny nose, itchy eyes and other summer allergy symptoms.

"I love baseball in the summer, but every time I get near the grass, my nose runs and I get real bad sneezing fits," said George Campos, who coaches a 10-year-old city team. "Sometimes I even freak out the kids with all my sneezing."

Campos does not know exactly what he is allergic to; he just knows it gives him headaches.

"It's strange because I hardly get them (sneezing episodes) in spring," he said. "But I don't mind coming out here with the kids. It keeps me young."

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### **How to cope**

Here are some ways to treat summer allergies:

- Take an over-the-counter antihistamine to relieve symptoms such as itchy eyes, skin and throat, and sneezing.
- Get an allergy shot from your physician. Allergy shots are also called immunotherapy. They shots are given to increase your ability to tolerate allergen. Immunotherapy does not cure your allergies. The shot is only an aid to help you tolerate the allergies.
- Use a cold compress on your eyes when they are irritated.
- Try allergy eyedrops to relieve irritated eyes.
- Wash your hands frequently, especially if you have been outdoors. Your hands may have leftover pollen residue on them.
- Check for dust mites in your mattress. Dust mites can live in your mattress, upholstery and carpet. They stay alive in temperatures above 70 degrees.
- Pollen counts are higher in the early hours of the morning. They usually lower after 10 a.m.
- Take antihistamines before exercising outdoors.
- If you suffer from itchy skin, try bathing with peppermint or eucalyptus soap. These are natural antiseptics.
- Clean your car frequently if it is parked under a high-pollen producing tree.
- Keep your windows shut on days when the pollen count is high.
- Do not sit under trees or in the grass, cut grass without wearing a face mask or exercise outdoors if you suffer from severe summer allergies or asthma.

Source: [www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com).