



It's Coming for You—Fall Allergies

It's been waiting for you. Since Labour Day it's been getting stronger and now it's almost ready to strike.

We're not referring to a kidnapper but many allergy sufferers may feel like they're being held hostage by ragweed, an autumn-blooming flower that can give allergy sufferers as many problems as spring allergens.

This dull yellow fern-like plant, which flourishes during dry hot spells, usually grows in rural areas. Each plant produces up to one billion pollen grains that can travel by wind for hundreds of miles. All it needs to grow is sunshine and freshly-turned earth to expose the seeds buried in the soil. Ragweed seeds can rest in soil for as long as 40 years waiting for ideal conditions to germinate. The good news is that typically this bandit and its pollen will be killed off around November when the first frost appears.

But ragweed isn't the only allergen to pick on unsuspecting humans during the fall allergy season. There's another culprit that doesn't go down as easily as ragweed—mould. Mould spores can sneak into nasal passages when you least expect it. It thrives in decaying leaves and other vegetation. Unlike ragweed, mould can become dormant throughout winter only to reappear during spring when there is an abundance of soggy organic matter.

And this offender doesn't just lurk outside; it can invade basements, gutters, laundry rooms and bathrooms. That musty basement smell could be a clue that mould is present. With damp walls, leaky foundations, paper-filled storage boxes, improper insulation and carpeting, basements are perfect breeding grounds.

Tips For Dealing with Fall Allergies

Have an allergy test. That way, if you do have allergies, you'll know what to avoid. With influenzas and colds making the fall rounds, allergies are often mistaken for these ailments.

Keep Pollen at Bay

Fill in freshly-turned earth on your property with mulch, grass seed or another plant so ragweed can't infiltrate your space.

Close windows to prevent pollen from getting indoors and vacuum frequently removing pollen from upholstery, carpets and curtains. Also, wear a face mask while working outside to filter allergens and avoid hanging laundry outside to dry to prevent pollen from sticking to clothing or bedding.

Keep it Clean to Avoid Mould

As fall progresses, rake leaves often and keep gutters clear, removing the opportunity for mould to grow. Move composting bins away from the house. Trim trees and shrubs because shady homes dry out more slowly, allowing mould to flourish. Clean up debris in wood piles, grass clippings and building materials where mould can thrive.

Routinely remove any indoor mould around sinks and tubs. Bleach often works but, for those with breathing sensitivities, a milder mould remover may be better.

Out With the Old

Consider replacing basement, bathroom and kitchen carpeting with hard surface flooring to give mould one less place to hide. Investing in a dehumidifier can also keep humidity levels low to hinder mould growth.

Finally, get rid of those boxes of mementos and old clothing piling up in the basement. Give those old clothes to a charitable organization in need of clothing donations. And rather than stuffing those souvenirs into a box, try scrapbooking them. Mould won't be able to damage them or to make you sick and you'll be able to share your memories with others more conveniently.