



IT'S MID-WINTER! THE POLLEN COUNT IS ZERO! WHY ARE MY ALLERGIES SO BAD?

Ever wonder about this? You're probably suffering from "perennial" allergy - allergies that are active all year round - and not just in the spring and fall pollen seasons. It is very common to have both seasonal and perennial allergies.

Perennial allergens are usually found indoors: dust mites, cockroaches, animals, feathers. Mold spores may be found indoors and outdoors, in damp areas, in soil, or in wet leaves on the ground. These allergens can cause the same symptoms you experience with your seasonal allergies. Common symptoms include sneezing; red, itchy, watery eyes; stuffy nose and skin rashes. People with asthma may notice more wheezing, cough and shortness of breath.

The best way to get relief from allergies is to see an Allergist to find out what you are allergic to. An Allergist is a Medical Doctor who specializes in the treatment of allergies and asthma. The Allergist can show you how to decrease dust mite, mold and cockroach allergens in your indoor environment, and even how to improve your symptoms if you have pets at

home. Antihistamine medications, such as loratadine (Claritin) or cetirizine (Zyrtec) may also be helpful. Corticosteroid nasal sprays like fluticasone (Flonase) help to prevent congestion, sneezing and runny nose. If you have asthma, you should always consult your asthma doctor for a treatment plan.

But wait! There's more!

Some winter symptoms are not caused by allergies and even people who are not allergic may suffer. During the winter, we are exposed to cold, dry air outdoors and hot dry air in a heated home. This can be very irritating to the skin, causing redness, itching and dryness. It even has a name: **“winter itch.”** Winter conditions can dry out the eyes and nose, causing eye itching, stuffy nose and even nosebleeds. You may benefit from plain moisturizing eyedrops or nose sprays; and you need to make sure that your skin is well moisturized.

Also, because we spend more time indoors in winter, we are exposed to indoor *irritants*—not *allergens*--such as cigarette smoke, cleaning products and gases from stoves or furnaces. These may cause symptoms that mimic allergies.

In most cases, an Allergist can help you sort out the causes of your symptoms, and to prescribe treatment. If you would like to see our Asthma/Allergy specialist at the Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center, call 718-945-7150 to make an appointment.



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