

Traveling with Allergies

7 Tips for Managing Seasonal Allergies on Vacation

SUMMER IS HERE, which means that school is over for the year, temperatures are climbing, and you're clamoring to use up your vacation days somewhere sunny and fun. But before you pack your swimsuit and strap your bike to the car, have you thought about your allergies?

The American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) estimates that 50 million Americans suffer from allergic rhinitis, or hay fever, characterized by the telltale symptoms of sneezing, itchy, watery eyes, a stuffy nose, and nasal congestion. Seasonal allergies can be pesky for some and debilitating for others. It's important to understand that when you travel, you could be heading to a climate or landscape that presents a whole host of potential new allergens, even if you've gotten your home triggers under control. With that in mind, here are some tips that can help you avoid the pitfalls of an allergy attack when you're on the road this summer.

1 Check the forecast. The amount and type of outdoor allergens often depends on the weather. For this reason, you should research the forecast for the place you'll be visiting to find out what kinds of trees, weeds, and pollen are present in the area. You can get pollen and mold reports at www.aaaai.org/nab, or live update counts and warnings at www.weather.com.

2 Consider your clothes. Whatever you are wearing for your adventures, just remember that allergens in the air are going to cling to your clothes, bringing them inside with you. Whether it's full laundry service or a quick wash in the sink, it's a good idea to clean your clothes after wear, especially if you will be wearing them again while you are away. The same goes with shoes. They will track in whatever is on the ground — your best bet is to leave them outside all together.

3 Get your hair wet. Similar to the above tip, your hair can carry a lot of allergens, and imagine where those allergens end up when you lay down to sleep. Give your hair a quick wash at night to keep your pillowcase and your sheets clean.



4 Bring your own pillow. If you have a special allergy-protectant pillowcase, don't hesitate to bring it along with you. If it helps you at home, chances are it will help you on-the-go.

5 Request an air purifier. Depending on where you are staying, a hotel may be able to offer you either a standing air purifier, or a room that has filters installed in the air conditioner. You can also ask to bring along your own if they have nothing available.

6 Head for the water. As if you need a reason to go to the beach, the ocean and the bay tend to have much lower pollen counts. You may even find your symptoms disappear completely at these destinations.

7 Consult your doctor. Talk to your doctor or allergist before your trip, and make sure you have any allergy medication refilled and available for your travels, or you receive your allergy shots if you need them. You can also research ahead of time to find a doctor or allergist where you'll be staying, just in case you need one.

Keep these tips in mind, and your worry-free vacations this summer will be allergy-free too. ■

Information provided by the American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology. Visit www.aaaai.org

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Your doctor, therapist, or sleep technologist has given you this patient education handout to further explain or remind you about an issue related to your health. It is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, discuss them with your doctor, therapist, or sleep technologist. Look under the "Handouts" tab at advanceweb.com/respiratory for more educational handouts.
