

## ABOUT US

The New Brunswick Lung Association is a charitable organization dedicated to good health through the prevention of lung disease and promotion of wellness through our programs, advocacy, education and research.

Our goal is simple: to improve respiratory health.

As part a part of Canada's oldest health charity, the Lung Association has its roots in the fight against tuberculosis. Most of the work was funded by our Christmas Seal Campaign which began in 1908. The Christmas seals have adorned Canadian Christmas mail and packages ever since, and is still a staple source of funds to allow us to carry out our work

Today, the New Brunswick Lung Association works toward improving respiratory health at the local, provincial and federal level. Our activities encompass a the spectrum of respiratory health including lung disease, environmental considerations such as indoor and outdoor air quality, and climate change.

B R E A T H E  
the lung association

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## ALLERGIES

### What you need to know



www.nb.lung.ca

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE ALLERGIES?

If you have allergies, your body is sensitive to things that most people don't react to. You may be sensitive to pollen, dust, pet dander, food, or something else. When you are near the things that cause your allergies (allergens), your body over-reacts. Your body's over-reaction can cause many symptoms: itching, watery eyes, wheezing, coughing, sneezing, and more.

## THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF ALLERGIES

### Hay Fever

Despite the name, hay is not the cause of the sneezing, watery eyes and scratchy throat commonly associated with hay fever. Hay fever is an allergic response to allergins that can be inhaled: pollen from ragweed, grass and trees, pet dander, mold, etc.

There are two kinds of hay fever. The most common, known as **seasonal allergic rhinitis**, is an allergic reaction to pollens released by trees, grasses or weeds. People may be allergic to one or several pollens, and they get hay fever when those particular pollens are in season.

A second type of hay fever is called **perennial allergic rhinitis**. People affected by perennial allergic rhinitis are affected by allergies year-round. Their hay fever is caused by indoor allergens such as dust mites, mold, and furry animals.

## Hay Fever Symptoms

Many people compare hay fever symptoms to those of the common cold. Typical hay fever symptoms include:

- Frequent sneezing
- Itchy and watery eyes
- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Scratchy, irritated throat
- Headache
- Difficulty sleepy
- Worsening of symptoms in people with asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Hay fever symptoms are different for each person, ranging from mild to severe. Untreated, these symptoms can be hard to live with and can interfere with daily activities. Repeated hay fever attacks can result in chronic sinusitis - a painful swelling of the sinus cavities.

## Ragweed: a common trigger

Ragweed plants are one of the most widespread causes of symptoms in seasonal hay fever sufferers. It's estimated that 75 per cent of people with hay fever are bothered by ragweed. Ragweed is a weed commonly found in Eastern and Midwestern Canada. Each plant produces up to 1 billion pollen grains. Warmth, humidity and wind promote the release of pollen.

Ragweed plants usually grow in rural areas. Near the plants, the pollen counts are highest shortly after dawn. Pollen counts peak in many urban areas between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., depending on the weather.

## DONATE TO NEW BRUNSWICK LUNG ASSOCIATION

We rely on support from our donors. You can donate online at [www.nb.lung.ca](http://www.nb.lung.ca), by calling 1 800 565-5864, or by mailing this form!

I would like to make a one time donation of:

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## Hay Fever for those with Asthma and COPD

Seasonal allergies are a common trigger for people with lung diseases like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Exposure to pollen can trigger disease flare-ups and make your symptoms much worse. Ask your health professional for help in creating an action plan that outlines important information on what medications you should take and when, your triggers, the early warning signs of an attack or flare-up, and when to seek emergency medical treatment, depending on the weather.

### Work with your health professional

If you think you may have hay fever, see your health professional. If possible, keep track of when your symptoms started and stopped - this can be an important clue in helping your health professional to identify the types of pollens that trigger your symptoms and make treatment easier. Your health professional may suggest an over-the counter (non prescription) antihistamine, prescribe special cortisone nose sprays and eye drops, or refer you to an allergist for further tests.

### Controlling Hay Fever

- Check the pollen forecast on The Weather Channel or in your local newspaper before going outdoors.
- Wear wraparound sunglasses to prevent pollen from blowing into your eyes

- Avoid places with lots of grass, like parks or fields, especially if the grass is freshly cut

- If possible, ask someone else to mow the lawn or weed the garden

- Keep windows closed and use air conditioning at home and in the car to reduce exposure to outdoor pollens. If a window-type air conditioner is used, the vent should be kept closed. Don't line-dry sheets or clothing outdoors; they may capture pollen

- After spending time outdoors change your clothing and wash your hair. Your hair and clothes can trap pollen, which can be released indoors

- Ask your health professional about anti-histamine medications and prescription nose and eye drops to relieve symptoms. Be careful when driving or using machinery as some allergy medicines can make you sleepy

## Anaphylactic Shock

Anaphylactic shock is a severe allergic reaction that can be fatal.

Time is of the essence: death may occur within minutes. The first sign of anaphylactic shock is usually itchiness

Taking the pre-measured dose of epinephrine in an EpiPen will push your blood pressure back up to normal and reduce swelling, especially in your airways. After taking the adrenaline, have someone take you to the nearest emergency department for assessment.

## Some causes of Anaphylactic Shock

- shellfish, peanuts, and other foods
- insect stings
- some medicines

## Symptoms of Anaphylactic Shock

- itchiness
- swelling of the throat and/or other parts of the body
- hives
- shortness of breath, wheeze, chest tightness
- cramps, nausea or diarrhea
- feeling faint
- feeling anxious
- collapsing (passing out, fainting)
- death, without treatment

**EMERGENCY TREATMENT  
FOR ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK:**  
• ADRENALINE SHOT (EPIPEN)  
• CALL 911

## Preventing Anaphylactic Shock

The best way to prevent anaphylactic shock to avoid the thing you're allergic to.

Unfortunately, this is not always possible. Everyone with a known life-threatening allergy or a history of very severe symptoms should own and carry an adrenaline kit (EpiPen) at all times, and know how and when to use it.

Make sure you have discussed how and when to use your emergency kit with your health professional before you need to use it. Wear a MedicAlert bracelet or other identification.