

## Running With Spring Allergies

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Spring is in full bloom and with the flowering trees and greener lawns comes itchy, watery eyes and sneezing, red noses. I never had allergies until I moved to this area and I needed to make a few changes to my running routine to accommodate that foggy-headed, stuffy nosed feeling. And while running with allergies is a pain in the nose, there are a few things you can try to make it a little easier. Here are my tips for running through allergy season:

- Allergens are lowest in the morning, so try to plan your run in the early morning hours (before 9:00 AM). This is also something to try when the weather starts warming up in the summer. It will only get warmer as the day goes on.
- Pay attention to the weather. Pollen is less abundant in cooler, wetter weather, making it a little easier to breathe than in warm, dry weather.
- Run in more open areas and try to avoid routes with lots of trees or grassy fields. The lesser amounts of allergens from trees and grass will help you breathe better.
- If you're prone to itchy eyes, wear protective sunglasses to protect your eyes from irritants.
- Breathe through your nose. As with any respiratory problem, like asthma or allergies, it's easier to breathe through your nose than your mouth. The nasal passages help filter out the air as you inhale. If this isn't an option for you, try cupping your mouth with your hand to decrease the amount of allergens you breathe in.
- Try to slow your pace. It will be easier for you to breathe. Try to focus on your running form as well: keep your shoulders loose, your chest open, and your posture tall. This will create more space in your chest, helping you breathe a little easier.
- If you take a decongestant, be sure to drink enough water. By definition, decongestants can contribute to dehydration.
- If you take an allergy medication, be sure you are alert enough to be running outside alone. Perhaps you should avoid listening to music to be sure you're safe on your run.
- Be sure to shower after your run to remove the allergens from your hair and skin. Even on non-running days, showering at night will remove allergens, decreasing the chances of an allergy attack while you sleep. You should also take off your shoes as soon as you get home so you don't track allergens throughout your house.

On really high pollen days, you may just want to take it indoors. That way you won't have to battle the elements.

Take care this allergy season and happy running!

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