

# TAB Monthly Newsletter

A Newsletter for people living with COPD to help us connect with our peers

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## Happy Easter!



Spring is in the air! Crocuses and daffodils are popping up all over the place. Robins are starting to reappear and roll up the rug has come and gone. Springtime is a time of rebirth. It's the time of year we like to be freshening things up. A good place to start is by monitoring the air we breathe, both indoor and outdoor.

### Here Are a Few Suggestions:

- If you smoke cigarettes, quit, and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Cleaning your house regularly can also help improve breathing conditions.
- Get a friend, family member or pay someone to wash your walls and floors.
- If painting, buy only chemical free paint and make sure to ventilate well.
- Cleaning products should be chemical-free. Get rid of aerosols.
- Check the house carefully for any signs of dust, mold or mildew. It's unwise to not wear a facemask when appropriate.
- Get fresh air into the house.
- The Lung Institute says, "Allergy proofing your environment can go a long way. Install a good filtration system in your air conditioner, and keep windows closed when pollen counts are high.
- For a copy of "51 Tips for Improving your Indoor Air Quality" email your request to [tabmonthlynewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:tabmonthlynewsletter@gmail.com)

### 5 Things we often forget to clean

- Toothbrush Holder: Rinse with hot water, scrub with a brush, fill with antibacterial mouthwash, let sit for a few minutes and rinse.
- Pillow and Mattress: Remove bedding, use upholstery brush to vacuum, wash pillows and rinse twice.
- Remote Control: Alcohol wipe (remove batteries first).
- Light Switches: Use lightly dampened cloth with all purpose cleaner.
- Walls and Baseboards: Use warm soapy water and sponge. Don't leave too damp boards to dry.

### Keep An Eye On Outdoor Air Quality

#### Pollution

"Downtown Hamilton has the highest rate of air pollution in the province," said Alice Peter, director of population health and prevention at Cancer Care Ontario. "It could be from industry or cars or anything that burns." To find your local AQHI readings;

<https://www.theweathernetwork.com/ca/forecasts/air-quality/ontario/hamilton> or [www.airhealth.ca](http://www.airhealth.ca)

#### Allergies

Not everyone with COPD suffers from common spring allergies, but research shows that COPD patients with allergies are at higher risk for COPD flare-ups. If you're one of them, be sure to check the pollen count. If the pollen counts look high, plan to stay inside as much as possible. For pollen forecast go to:

<https://www.theweathernetwork.com/ca/forecasts/pollen/ontario/hamilton>

# Is It Allergies Or A Cold? Here's How To Tell

You woke up this morning and you're all stuffed up. Your head aches, your nose is running and you've got a bad case of the sneezes.

Could it be a spring cold or do you have an allergy? We're transitioning from the cold and flu season into what's looking like a doozy of an allergy season. Trees are spewing out microscopic particles of misery – it's like pollen is falling from the sky. Adding to the pollen peril coming your way are the green, green grasses of home that are next in line to pollinate. And it's not just the greens: Throw in weeds, moulds, dust mites, pet dander and other pesky triggers.

Get set for some serious sneezing – that's if you've developed an allergy. Even for those of us who've never had an allergy, this could be your unlucky season – pollen counts appear to be rising yearly, entrapping more and more people in its web of sneezing and sniffing. Research indicates that, thanks to climate change, pollen counts are expected to double in the next three decades as allergenic, pollen-producing plants bloom longer with the warmer weather.

If you're confused as to if you have a cold or an allergy, you're not alone.

"It may seem gross but the best way to tell the difference is to look at the colour of the nasal discharge. Allergies usually produce clear nasal secretions. A cold infection usually comes with a yellow-colored nasal discharge," says Jason Tetro, microbiologist and researcher at [jasontetro.com](http://jasontetro.com).

Besides a nose that runs like it's in a long distance race, you will likely be congested but won't have a fever, chills or a deep cough. According to Tetro, colds and allergies have similar symptoms such as sneezing, a runny nose and congestion. "But colds also have coughs and sore throats while allergies will usually lead to itchy, watery eyes."

Symptoms of colds also tend to be continuous and last only a few days, while allergies can be intermittent with so-called "attacks" and the troubles can also go on for weeks or months.

But don't assume the worst. Your sneezing and runny nose may be over in mere days and you'll soon be enjoying the sunshine and warm weather.

"Unless you know you suffer from allergies, the most likely cause is a cold. We can get several over the course of a year and they do not always happen in the fall and winter seasons," Tetro says.

Because colds are usually viral in nature, treatments are limited to dealing with the symptoms and at times improving the immune system.

"Over-the-counter medications such as cough syrup and anti-inflammatory medications are helpful and increasing Vitamin D intake may assist in recovery time," says Tetro.

The best treatments for allergies are antihistamines, which block the molecule that triggers the symptoms, and decongestants, which help to clear the nasal passages. If allergies are more severe, a doctor may prescribe a steroid to help reduce the impact of the allergic response.

Allergy sufferers can also try a few nutritional strategies to help prevent this overreaction of the regulatory immune response, suggests Tetro, including increasing levels of Vitamins A and D, consuming more essential fatty acids including DHA, as well as probiotic bacteria, such as Lactobacillus, and cutting back on fat and gluten intake. Go to: <https://www.theweathernetwork.com/ca/forecasts/pollen/ontario/hamilton>  
<https://www.theweathernetwork.com/news/articles/is-it-allergies-or-a-cold-heres-how-to-tell/81081>

***"If you can't breathe, nothing else matters"***

Canadian Lung Association

TAB Social Support Group — [tabmonthlynewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:tabmonthlynewsletter@gmail.com)