

How to allergy-proof your holiday

The end-of-year summer holidays 'tis also the season for increased allergies, warns a leading provider of antihistamines.

Mariska van Aswegen, spokesperson for generics firm, Pharma Dynamics says the holidays can increase one's risk of an allergic attack - think of an undusted bauble, a pine tree or Christmas pudding which could set off an allergenic meltdown.



Mariska van Aswegen

"People tend to be exposed to many more hidden allergens during the holidays than at any other time of the year. Family and friends gather in celebration - people are hugging and kissing hello and goodbye and unfortunately allergens get passed around. Pets, irritating odours, braai-wood or cigarette smoke at parties may also trigger an attack.

"Other major holiday allergens include food. The Christmas holidays mean lots of dining away from home and an abundance of parties - all of which heighten the chances that you will accidentally eat or be tempted to try foods you're allergic to. Dust mites are a perennial allergy irritant, but they can be even more aggravating around the holidays when we spend more time in hotel rooms and in other people's beds," she says.

According to Pharma Dynamics, more than 19,785,600 people are afflicted by allergies in South Africa of which 30% suffer from nasal allergies (16,488,000) and 6% (3,297,600) live with food allergies.

Van Aswegen says while it helps to know why your allergies may kick up during the holidays, it is just as important to know what you can do to relieve symptoms - or avoid triggers completely.

In its quest to help you breathe easier these holidays, Pharma Dynamics has compiled the following guide to help alleviate some allergy woes.

- Real Christmas trees are a haven for dust and pollen, so rather settle for an artificial tree
- Before hauling your tree inside - whether it's real or faux fir - hose it down and dry overnight to remove dust and mould or any pesticides that may have been sprayed on the branches
- Alternatively seek out tree alternatives, such as a driftwood, wire or cardboard option
- Wipe garlands and Christmas décor with a soft cloth or dry paint brush before hanging. At the end of the season, wrap with fresh paper, rather than reusing old paper
- Steer clear of scented candles as these can cause stuffy noses and irritate the lungs. Unscented beeswax candles or good quality soy options are more allergy-friendly
- When inviting guests, inquire about any food allergies to make sure your party doesn't go pear-shaped
- Apply petroleum jelly around the edge of your nostrils to stop pollen from entering your nasal passages
- Do not smoke or surround yourself with second-hand smoke as this can irritate the lining of your nose, eyes and throat
- Avoid spending time in areas abundant in insects. If you find yourself in this environment, avoid wearing strong scents and bright clothing. Cover sweet foods and drinks so that you don't attract bees and other stinging insects
- Stay indoors on hot, windy days and whenever the pollen count is high
- Make use of an air purifier
- Avoid freshly cut grass

If all else fails, Van Aswegen recommends the following over-the-counter and prescription medications, which should do the trick.

- **Antihistamines:** to reduce sneezing, sniffing and itching by blocking the effects of histamine in the body

- **Nasal sprays:** to clear mucus out of the nasal passageways to relieve congestion and prevent/treat inflammation. Some nasal sprays can also stop your body from releasing histamine before it triggers allergy symptoms such as an itchy, runny nose and sneezing
- **Nasal irrigation:** this involves using a syringe to fill the nasal cavities with a saline solution (a mix of salts and water), which reduces crusting and dryness
- **Eye drops:** for the relief of itchy, watery eyes

"Always read the packaging labels as some medications can only be used safely for a few days. Some can also make you drowsy. Before you use any of these medications, be sure to check with your doctor first.

"Should your allergies flare up or worsen whilst away on holiday, visit www.pharmadynamics.co.za for a list of allergy clinics throughout the country," advises van Aswegen.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>