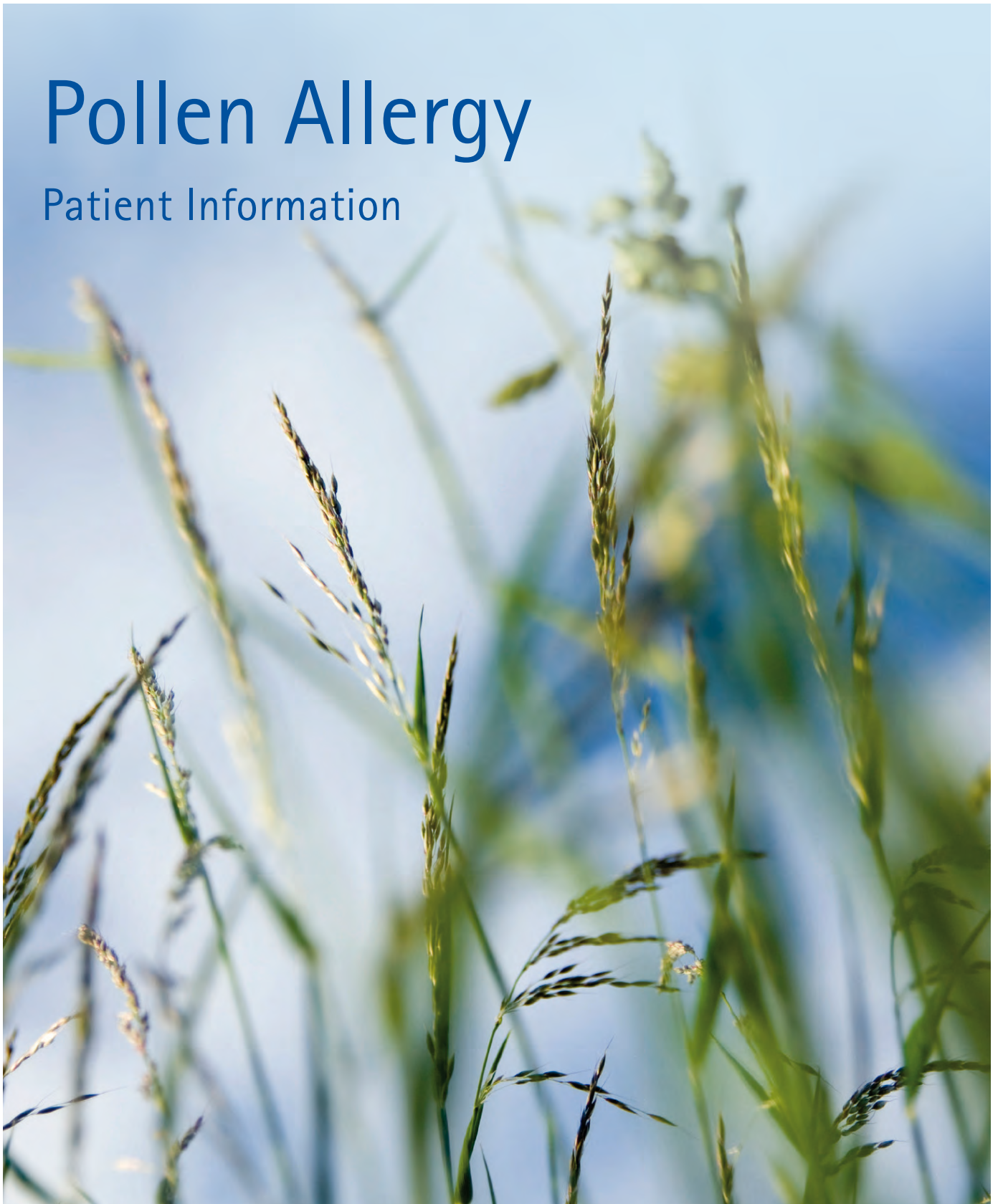


Pollen Allergy

Patient Information



Pollen Allergy

An allergy is a condition which manifests as an exaggerated defence reaction of the body to allergens.

In the case of pollen allergies, these allergens are pollen from a wide variety of plants such as trees, bushes, grasses, grains, herbs and – less frequently – flowers. They may trigger the following symptoms:

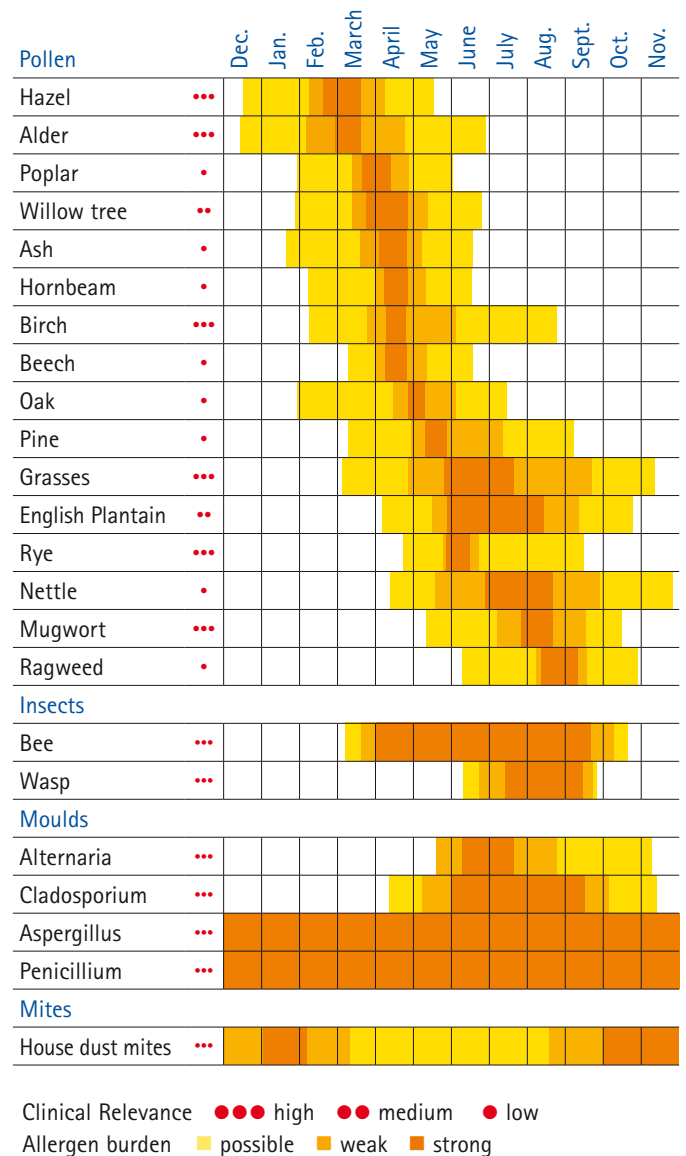
- Nose: Sneezing attacks, cold-like symptoms, mucosal swelling (stuffy nose, difficulty breathing) = rhinitis
- Eyes: Itching, redness, watering, swelling = conjunctivitis
- Airways: Cough, phlegm = bronchitis, acute shortness of breath, asthma
- Skin: Itching, skin rash (eczema, nettle rash, neurodermitis)
- Gastrointes-
tinal tract: Flatulence, nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting and abdominal pain
- Head: Migraine

Pollen allergens are so-called inhalation allergens as they are primarily taken in by breathing. Depending on the pollen season they are classified as:

- Early bloomers (e.g. alder, hazel),
- Middle bloomers (e.g. birch, beech, grasses),
- Summer bloomers (e.g. grasses, grains)
- Late bloomers (e.g. mugwort, nettle)

Blooming seasons are generally between December and October. Climatic and regional factors influence the blooming seasons, just as they do the pollen count and aggressiveness of the pollen. A blooming calendar will help you get an idea of "your pollen allergy" as determined by the tests in your particular case.

Allergen calendar for Central Europe



Measures for reduction of pollen exposure:

Pollen occur in very high concentrations in the outside air during a plant's blooming period. In the countryside, the pollen count is highest during the day, whereas over big cities it is highest in the evenings. Rain reduces the pollen count. In high mountain areas and at the seaside, pollen levels are extremely low.

1. The following rules should be observed:

- Sleep with windows closed.
- Limit the time you spend in the open air – you cannot live pollen-free. Adapt walking and sporting activities to suit the prevailing conditions.
- Wash or rinse your hair before you go to bed to get rid of pollen which would otherwise be deposited in your bed and breathed in.
- Remove clothes on which pollen have collected and keep them outside your bedroom.
- Do not dry your laundry outdoors.
- Avoid working in the garden, or only work in appropriate weather conditions.
- Keep car windows closed. Have a pollen filter fitted.
- Avoid additional irritations to the mucous membranes, ze.g. eye cosmetics, cleaning agents, smoking, frying fumes etc.
- Choose high mountain areas or the seaside when planning your holiday.
- Bear in mind that due to cross-reactivity the consumption of certain foods may trigger allergic reactions (see table).

2. Treatment of complaints (symptomatic therapy)

Depending on the location, type and intensity of the symptoms, appropriate anti-allergic medications (e.g. antihistamines, corticosteroids) are given as an acute immediate measure. This eliminates, alleviates or suppresses the symptoms caused by the allergy, but only as long as the medication is being used.

3. Treatment with specific immunotherapy

- The aim of specific immunotherapy (hyposensitization) is to build up the body's allergen tolerance through regular administration of the allergy-inducing substances.
- This treatment is the only means of influencing the immune system, whose reactions have been altered by the allergy. It thus gets to the root cause of the disease and results in regression/reduction of the symptoms.
- Specific immunotherapy should be initiated as early as possible in the course of the disease.
- Treatment involves preparations (in the form of injections, drops or tablets) which are specifically designed to target the allergens making ill. Therapy is ongoing and takes at least three years. It may be conducted before the particular pollen season (blooming season) or the whole year round.
- Pollen allergies should be taken seriously, as the so-called "allergic march" (progression of rhinitis to asthma) may occur during the course of the disease.

A selection of cross-reactive allergens

The following overview shows some foods which people with pollen allergies may not be able to tolerate due to their cross-reactivity.

Food	Birch	Grasses	Mugwort
Pome fruits (i.e. apple, pear)	■	■	■
Stone fruit, (i.e. cherry, peach)	■	■	■
Kiwi	■	■	■
Melon		■	
Mango	■		■
Orange	■		
Carrot, raw	■		■
Tomato, raw	■	■	■
Soy	■		
Celery	■	■	■
Onion		■	
Spices	■		■
Peanut			■
Nuts	■		■
Flours		■	

■ Cross-reaction frequent ■ Cross-reaction possible

Allergopharma GmbH & Co. KG

21462 Reinbek / Hamburg

Germany

Phone +49 40 727650

Fax +49 40 7227713

info@allergopharma.com

www.allergopharma.com

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