

ALLERGEN CROSS-REACTIVITY

ORAL ALLERGY SYNDROME MAY OCCUR IN UP TO ONE-THIRD OF INDIVIDUALS WITH SEASONAL ALLERGIES AND RESULTS FROM A CROSS-REACTIVITY BETWEEN SEASONAL AIRBORNE POLLEN PROTEINS (i.e. TREES, GRASS, WEEDS) WITH SIMILAR PROTEINS THAT ARE FOUND IN VARIOUS FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. COMMON SYMPTOMS INCLUDE ITCHING, TINGLING, AND/OR SWELLING OF THE MOUTH, TONGUE, AND THROAT, IMMEDIATELY AFTER EATING FRESH FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND OTHER FOODS. INDIVIDUALS WITH RAGWEED POLLEN ALLERGIES MIGHT EXPERIENCE THESE SYMPTOMS WHEN CONSUMING FOODS SUCH AS:

- BANANAS
- CUCUMBER
- MELON (CANTALOUPE, WATERMELON, HONEYDEW)
- ZUCCHINI
- SUNFLOWER SEEDS
- CHAMOMILE TEA
- ECHINACEA, GOLDENROD, DANDELION

ORAL ALLERGY SYNDROME IS ALSO COMMON IN PEOPLE WITH BIRCH TREE POLLEN ALLERGIES. FOODS THAT CAN TRIGGER A REACTION IN PEOPLE WITH THIS ALLERGY INCLUDE:

- PEACH
- APPLE
- PEAR
- CHERRY
- CARROT
- HAZLENUT
- KIWI
- ALMONDS

CURIOUSLY, CERTAIN FRUITS SUCH AS BANANAS, CHESTNUTS, KIWI FRUIT, AVOCADO AND TOMATO SHOW CROSS-REACTIVITY, PERHAPS BECAUSE OF RESEMBLANCE TO A LATEX PROTEIN COMPONENT. THESE FOODS HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR ANAPHYLACTIC REACTIONS IN LATEX-SENSITIVE PERSONS, WHILE MANY FOODS, INCLUDING FIGS, APPLES, CELERY, MELONS, POTATOES, AND PAPAYAS AND PITTED FRUITS, SUCH AS CHERRIES AND PEACHES, HAVE CAUSED PROGRESSIVE SYMPTOMS BEGINNING WITH ORAL ITCHING. PERSONS WITH A HISTORY OF REACTIONS TO THESE FOODS ARE AT INCREASED RISK OF DEVELOPING LATEX ALLERGY, AND THOSE WHO ARE SENSITIVE TO LATEX SHOULD AVOID FOODS TO WHICH THEY HAVE HAD PREVIOUS REACTIONS. GENERALLY, IF INDIVIDUALS WITH RAGWEED ALLERGIES EXPERIENCE ANY SYMPTOMS OF OAS, THEY SHOULD AVOID EATING THE FOODS LISTED ABOVE, ESPECIALLY DURING RAGWEED SEASON. HOWEVER COOKING THE FOOD WILL FREQUENTLY REDUCE AND/OR ELIMINATE A REACTION, THOUGH THIS IS NOT ALWAYS THE CASE.

SOMETIMES, OAS CAN INDUCE SEVERE THROAT SWELLING OR EVEN A SYSTEMIC REACTION IN A PERSON WHO IS HIGHLY ALLERGIC. IF YOU HAVE ANY FOOD ASSOCIATED SYMPTOMS, SEE AN ALLERGIST/IMMUNOLOGIST FOR AN APPROPRIATE EVALUATION, INCLUDING DIAGNOSTIC ALLERGY TESTS WHICH WILL DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT YOU SHOULD AVOID EATING CERTAIN FOODS.

CROSS REACTIONS

Allergies to a certain pollen are associated with OAS reactions to certain foods. For instance, an allergy to ragweed is associated with OAS reactions to banana, watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew, zucchini, and cucumber. This does not mean that all sufferers of an allergy to ragweed will experience adverse effects from all or even any of these foods. Reactions may begin with one type of food and with reactions to others developing later. However, reaction to one or more foods in any given category does not necessarily mean a person is allergic to all foods in that group.

Alder pollen: almonds, apples, celery, cherries, hazel nuts, peaches, pears, parsley, strawberry, raspberry

Birch pollen: almonds, apples, apricots, avocados, bananas, carrots, celery, cherries, chicory, coriander, fennel, fig, hazel nuts, kiwifruit, nectarines, parsley, parsnips, peaches, pears, peppers, plums, potatoes, prunes, soy, strawberries, wheat; Potential: walnuts

Grass pollen: fig, melons, tomatoes, oranges

Mugwort pollen : carrots, celery, coriander, fennel, parsley, peppers, sunflower

Ragweed pollen : banana, cantaloupe, cucumber, green pepper, paprika, sunflower seeds/oil, honeydew, watermelon, zucchini, echinacea, artichoke, dandelions, honey (if bees pollinate from wild flowers), hibiscus or chamomile tea

Possible cross-reactions (to any of the above): berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, etc), citrus (oranges, lemons, etc), grapes, mango, figs, peanut, pineapple, pomegranates, watermelon

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