



CENTRAL TEXAS ALLERGY & ASTHMA

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Oral Allergy Syndrome

Oral allergy syndrome (OAS) is a reaction to certain raw fruits and vegetables that occur in people who have seasonal allergies. This syndrome is caused by a cross reactivity between proteins in fruits and vegetables that are similar to proteins in some pollens. In people who are allergic to pollen, the body's immune system sees a similarity between the proteins in pollens and food, and triggers a reaction. Typically, once people start to react to some foods, they will also react to other foods in the same group. People may find that their allergies to raw fruits and vegetables subside during the season when the associated pollen levels are low. For example, a person may react to raw apples from March to October, but feel fine when eating them from November to February, when birch pollen is low.

The most common reactions are itching, hives, or swelling in the mouth, lips, tongue, and throat area. The symptoms can appear immediately or up to an hour after ingesting raw fruits or vegetables. These symptoms appear in up to 1/3 of allergy sufferers and can occur anytime of the year, but may be worse during the allergy season.

In most cases, OAS does not require medical treatment. The treatment is to avoid eating these foods especially during the allergy season. Another way to reduce the reaction is to cook, bake, or microwave the food. Eating canned food may help as well as peeling the food. The cooking process changes the protein enough that the immune system does not recognize the food as being the same as the pollen anymore. At times, an antihistamine can effectively relieve the symptoms. In adults and children with severe recurrent OAS, immunotherapy (allergy shots) to the pollen has been useful.

Cross-reactivity

Pollen	Potential Cross-reactive Foods
Ragweed	Bananas, melons (watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew), zucchini, cucumber, dandelions, chamomile tea
Birch	Apples, pears, peaches, apricots, cherries, plums, nectarines, prunes, kiwi, carrots, celery, potatoes, peppers, fennel, parsley, coriander, parsnips, hazelnuts, almonds, walnuts
Grass	Peaches, celery, melons, tomatoes, oranges
Mugwort	Celery, apple, kiwi, peanut, fennel, carrots, parsley, coriander, sunflower, peppers
Alder	Celery, pears, apples, almonds, cherries, hazelnuts, peaches, Parsley
Latex	Bananas, avocado, kiwi, chestnut, papaya