

# 7 signs of spring allergies

Few things are more deflating than finally venturing outdoors after a long winter of cabin fever, only to find that blooming trees and flowers start wreaking havoc with your personal health.

Spring allergies, also known as allergic rhinitis, occur when the body's immune system overreacts to indoor or outdoor allergens, such as tree and grass pollen, mold and dust. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, approximately 25.7 percent of adults and 18.9 percent of children in the United States suffer from seasonal allergies. Allergic rhinitis accounts for an estimated \$16 billion in annual health care costs and is a leading cause of reduced productivity while at work.

Identifying the symptoms of allergies is key to distinguishing them from a cold or another infection and to ensuring fast relief. Spring allergies typically peak from March to May and may even continue into July. Physicians will look for specific



physical markers to confirm allergies.

1. Sneezing: Sneezing can occur in rapid-fire patterns, known as paroxysmal sneezing, especially after spending time outdoors. These intense episodes can be tied to allergies or be symptomatic of another condition, says the National Institutes of Health.

2. Itchy, watery eyes: Allergic conjunctivitis is the medical term for this condition, which is a hallmark of spring allergies. Eyes will appear red, feel gritty or drip clear fluid.

3. Nasal congestion/runny nose: A thin, clear discharge typically is a sign of allergies, whereas any mucus that is thick, yellow or green could

indicate an infection. Constant upward rubbing of the nose from allergies (called the allergic salute) often causes a permanent transverse nasal crease at the junction of the nose tip and the bridge, says Healthline.

4. Itchy throat and ears: Pollen may cause a scratchy or tingly sensation in the throat and in the ear canals. Medical professionals warn that chronic inflammation from allergies is a primary risk factor for secondary bacterial infections that can occur in the sinuses and ears. Eustachian tube dysfunction occurs when fluid builds up behind the eardrum because the eustachian tubes become blocked or don't open properly to let fluid drain to the nose and throat, says the Cleveland Clinic. Pressure imbalances, muffled hearing, popping sounds, and even pain can occur.

5. "Allergic shiners": Nasal congestion can cause swelling and increased blood vessels to the small veins in the infraorbital area, causing

dark, bluish circles under the eyes called periorbital hyperpigmentation, says the Center for Orofacial Myology. This makes allergy sufferers appear as though they have two black eyes.

6. Cough: Post-nasal drip occurs when mucus drips down the back of the throat from the nose. This can cause a persistent, dry cough that's often worse at night. Post-nasal drip also may result in a sore throat and a "cobblestone" appearance in the back of the throat that's visible during a medical exam.

7. Fatigue: Insufficient rest due to allergy-related discomfort can cause those with spring allergies to feel fatigued. The constant immune system response to allergies also can lead to daytime tiredness and lack of focus.

Allergic rhinitis is a problem for millions of people each spring. A combination of avoiding triggers and using allergy medications can help calm any symptoms that crop up.

# The dangers of smartphone usage while driving

Few likely imagined that a day would come when a person could communicate, browse the internet, take photos and videos, play music, and much more all from a device small enough to store in a pants pocket. But that's just what one gets with a smartphone. These amazing devices have transformed how people engage in everyday life. Although smartphones have their upside, there are disadvantages to the connectivity they provide - including the threat phones pose when used while behind the wheel.

Anything that causes a driver to take his or her eyes off of the road, even if only for a few seconds, can prove disastrous. And smartphones have proven particularly distracting for drivers. In fact, according to Franciscan Health, one in four accidents occur because a driver was using a cell phone, hands-free or not. Distracted driving



contributed to 3,522 deaths and 362,415 injuries in the United States in 2021, the most recent year for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's published estimates.

More than 20 percent of respondents in a 2022 NHTSA survey admitted to using at least one smartphone-based distraction, such as social media, texting or video calls, while

driving.

Each time a driver gets away with using a phone without incident while behind the wheel, he or she may feel like it is no big deal. However, there is very real danger in doing so. Here are some facts that highlight how dangerous using a smartphone while driving can be:

- The National Safety Council has found drivers using hands-free and handheld cell phones fail to see up to 50 percent of the information in their driving environment. This is known as "inattention blindness."

- The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety says using a cell phone while driving increases crash risk, as researchers have consistently linked texting or manipulating a cell phone to increased risk. When the IIHS monitored drivers who frequently use cell phones while driving for one year, those drivers

had the highest rates of near crashes and crashes.

- Using driving simulators or instrumented vehicles, various analyses have found typing or reading text messages significantly slowed reaction time and increased lane deviations. It also increased the length of time drivers looked away from the roadway. The NSC says drivers using cell phones had reaction times slower than drivers impaired by alcohol at .08 blood alcohol concentration.

- When a person sends a text message or reads a message, it takes his or her eyes off the road for five seconds. Going 55 miles per hour while texting is like driving the length of a football field with one's eyes closed.

Although smartphones are convenient, they should be stored out of reach while driving to limit the temptation of use.

## Donations needed to shrink feral cat populations

From staff reports

Volunteers with the LaRue County Snip & Clip Clinic are asking for donations to continue the organization's efforts to reduce local feral cat populations.

Also labeled as unowned or community cats, these felines are free-roaming cats that live outdoors in neighborhoods, sometimes in groups called colonies. They are associated with a number of sociological and ecological conflicts, including the spread of parasites and diseases, damage to garden and property, and predation and impacts on native wildlife.

Feral cats are also considered a problem due to rapid overpopulation: according to data from the non-profit organization Friends of Hardin County Animal Shelter (FOHCAS), an unsprayed female cat, her mate and their offspring can produce over 11 million cats over a 9-year life span.

One of most humane and efficient way of stabilizing - and ultimately reducing - feral cat popula-

tions is through the "trap-neuter-release" (TNR) program. TNR calls for catching feral cats, spaying or neutering them and then releasing them back to their home. By stopping the reproduction cycle, unwanted cat populations near homes and businesses are reduced.

"In a perfect world, all [community cats] would have loving homes and everyone's happy," Myra Covault, FOHCAS Board of Director Chair, said. "But we, of course, know we don't live in a perfect world, so we're trying to do what we can to keep them from reproducing."

LaRue County has received grant funding from the Spay/Neuter Kentucky Program for the past few years. In 2025, enough resources were received to cover the cost of spaying and neutering 81 feral cats. LaRue County Dog Warden Shannon McCubbins said utilizing the funding - which wasn't received until

the end of last year and runs on the fiscal year - has been slow because the Hardin County Animal Shelter limits him to two cats per week.

Another endeavor aiming to reduce the community cat population is the LaRue County Snip & Clip Clinic, which is a joint effort between local residents Denise and the late Brian Martin and the FOHCAS. Denise said she and her husband decided to involve themselves with reducing local community cat populations after receiving first-hand experience with the problem when they purchased a property in Magnolia in 2003.

"It was a beautiful property, overrun by semi-feral barn cats," she said. "We started trapping and neutering and releasing the cats back on the farm. By the end, we altered 47 cats ... and placed 116 kittens into rescues."

This experience made the pair realize the need for LaRue County to have a low-cost spay/neuter

program. With financial support from the Martin's, five separate clinics have been held since late 2024, resulting in a total of 142 local unowned cats being spayed and neutered.

The average cost of a clinic is \$3,200. Because the clinics are run by volunteers, the primary expense is veterinarian costs. Although the Martins have covered these costs to date, Covault is asking for community support to expand and continue these efforts, stating that doing so benefits the entire community.

"You could say, 'Well, I didn't make them homeless' or 'They're not in my backyard.' Guess what? It's [only] a matter of time before they end up in your backyard," she said.

A fundraiser hosted for the program in October 2025 netted enough to cover the full cost of the organization's next clinic, which will be held on March 16, and additional revenue to cover the

cost of half of the next clinic. Covault said the organization will soon begin setting up at area events to fundraise for the program, with a goal of being more present in LaRue County.

"It's about increasing awareness so that you all know we're doing this work out there," she said. "And then, as citizens of LaRue County, you hopefully help raise the funds - 100% of everything raised stays here in LaRue County and goes toward this program."

Individuals interested in helping to fund a LaRue County Snip & Clip Clinic may make donations on foocas.org; a note that the donation is for LC Snip & Clip is required to ensure it is applied to the local program. Donations can also be given in the form of in-kind donations such as auction items or professional services or volunteer hours.

"We can't do it unless we've got the bodies and the interest to help," Covault said.

## A Moment in Women's History Month

Margaret Ingels was born on October 25, 1892, in Paris, KY.

Ingels came to the University of Kentucky hoping to pursue a degree in architecture. She had become interested in the process of condensation as a young girl and set out to learn as much as she could about science and engineering before entering college. Machine shop instructor Joseph Dicker said he tried to exempt Ingels from the heavy parts of engineering work, "but she would not hear of it. She keeps pace with the best of her classmates and asks odds of no one. The contour that her tanned arm displays when she grasps the sledge handle shows that she can suit the deed to the will."

Fortunately, for the engineering profession, there was no degree program in architecture at UK at that time and Dean F. Paul Anderson persuaded her to

pursue a degree in mechanical engineering as "the next best thing." She was the first female engineering graduate from this institution when she received her Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering in 1916. Ingels was also the second woman-engineering graduate in the United States and the first woman

to receive the professional degree of Mechanical Engineer.

Following graduation, she worked for the Chicago Telephone Company in the traffic-engineering department. She left Chicago in 1917 for Pittsburgh and the Carrier Engineering Corporation where her interest in "conditioned air" began. She received the Mechanical Engineer professional degree in 1920 and the next year she joined the American Society of Heating and Ventilating Engineers research lab where she studied air conditioning for six years. In 1931, she returned

to Carrier-Lyle Corporation in Syracuse, New York. That same year President Hoover invited her to Washington to attend the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership. She remained with Carrier until her retirement.

She was a spokesperson for the profession, speaking to more than 12,000 people during more than 200 speeches from 1932 until

1952. In 1940, she was selected as one of 100 women in the United States who had successful careers in fields not open to women in 1840. Ingels received an Honorary Doctor of Law degree from UK in 1957 and was selected as a University of Kentucky Distinguished Alumnus in 1965.

Ingels died on December 13, 1971, at the age of 79 years old in Lexington, KY.



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