

## Oral Allergy Syndromes

People affected by oral allergy suffer immediate symptoms in the lips, mouth and throat when they eat certain kinds of fresh fruit, raw vegetables or nuts. This is due to a secondary kind of food allergy, and the primary cause is likely to be hay fever (allergy to pollen) or latex allergy (allergy to natural rubber).

### Pollen Food Syndrome

Many hay fever sufferers who are sensitive to the proteins in pollen also react to similar proteins in fruits or vegetables. This usually only happens when the food is eaten raw. The condition is known as the *pollen food syndrome*.

Most people with this condition will suffer from hay fever during the pollen season. Because the proteins in certain pollens are similar to those in some foods, the antibodies created mistake the food for pollen and this causes a mouth reaction when the food is eaten at any time of the year.

Symptoms usually come on immediately and they may include:

- Swelling or itching of lips, tongue, mouth, and ears.
- Itching in the throat. Throat swelling is possible, although this is unlikely to prove serious.
- Symptoms in the oesophagus (gullet) or stomach, including pain, nausea and even vomiting.

Most people are unlikely to ever have a severe reaction and mild reactions are unlikely to get worse over time. However, medical advice should be sought in all cases. This is particularly important if the swelling causes difficulty in swallowing or breathing, or if the symptoms include asthma.

The condition is more likely to develop in people who have had pollen allergy for a long time. It is more frequently seen in adults than children, although it is becoming commoner in children, as hay fever develops in younger age groups.

Different types of pollen can cause the problem, but *the most common in the UK is birch pollen*. This causes hay fever symptoms from the end of March until the end of May. More than half of the people who are allergic to birch pollen will suffer mouth symptoms due to pollen food syndrome. Many people may not realise they have the condition as in its mildest form people may only experience a sensation in the lips or tongue after eating one of the implicated fresh fruits or raw vegetables.

The following foods, when eaten fresh or raw, are the commonest foods that cause the symptoms of pollen food syndrome:

<b>Almond</b>	<b>Green pea</b>	<b>Peach</b>
<b>Apple</b>	<b>Hazelnut</b>	<b>Peanut</b>
<b>Apricot</b>	<b>Kiwi fruit</b>	<b>Pear</b>
<b>Bean sprouts</b>	<b>Jack fruit</b>	<b>Plum</b>
<b>Bell pepper</b>	<b>Mango</b>	<b>Raspberry</b>
<b>Carrot</b>	<b>Melon</b>	<b>Soya</b>
<b>Celery</b>	<b>Nectarine</b>	<b>Tomato</b>
<b>Cherry</b>	<b>Parsley</b>	<b>Walnut</b>

Unprocessed soya (for example soya milk, tofu) can sometimes cause severe symptoms. Some patients also react to raw legumes and some to fresh herbs and spices. Some sufferers report itchy hands, nose or eye symptoms when handling raw potatoes, carrots or parsnips.

Grass pollen sometimes causes pollen food syndrome, and people who are allergic to both birch and grass pollen are likely to develop symptoms with a wider range of foods. Weed pollens such as mugwort can also act as the trigger.

### Latex Food Syndrome

Oral allergy also affects some people who suffer from latex allergy. This is caused by a reaction to the proteins found in natural latex, the raw material from which rubber is made. Latex allergy is particularly common amongst people who come into regular contact with soft latex products (e.g. latex gloves) such as healthcare workers.

Because latex proteins are similar food proteins, people who are allergic to latex might also react to these foods. The condition is known as the *latex food syndrome* and these foods are often involved.

<b>Almond</b>	<b>Fig</b>	<b>Papaya</b>
<b>Avocado</b>	<b>Hazelnut</b>	<b>Passion fruit</b>
<b>Banana</b>	<b>Kiwi fruit</b>	<b>Peach</b>
<b>Cherry</b>	<b>Mango</b>	<b>Pineapple</b>
<b>Chestnut</b>	<b>Melon</b>	<b>Plum</b>

