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Oral Allergy Syndrome ^{1,2}

Oral Allergy Syndrome is a term used to describe itchy or scratchy mouth symptoms caused by raw fruits or vegetables in people who also have fever. Symptoms are typically limited to the mouth. This reaction is caused by an allergic response to the pollen that crosses over to similar proteins in the foods. Most people affected by oral allergy syndrome can eat cooked fruits or vegetables because the proteins are sensitive to heating. The condition is also known as pollen-food syndrome.

Onset

Older children, teens, or young adults: typically patients have been eating the implicated foods without problems for many years.

Relation to hay fever

Hay fever is usually present before oral symptoms (seasonal allergy to pollens) to foods begin.

Symptoms

Limited to itchy mouth and throat with occasional itchy ears and swelling of the lips; *never* generalized!

Difference between raw and cooked foods

Symptoms are caused by raw fruits or vegetables; cooked or canned foods and juices are tolerated.

Treatment

Avoidance of the fresh forms of the food (and sometimes all forms of the foods) may be recommended. Typically, cooked or pasteurized form of the foods can be tolerated. Symptoms resolve usually within minutes after the food is swallowed or removed from mouth, and treatment typically is not necessary, though antihistamines are sometimes prescribed. Progression to a severe allergic reaction (also known as anaphylaxis) is unusual. For more serious symptoms or concerns about a particular food, your physician may prescribe an epinephrine injector. Interestingly, many patients placed on immunotherapy for a component of a pollen allergy will have the added benefit of improvement of the oral allergy symptoms.

Common pollen-food associations **

- Alder pollen: almonds, apples, celery, cherries, hazel nuts, peaches, pears, parsley
- Birch pollen: almonds, apples, apricots, avocados, bananas, carrots, celery, cherries, chicory, coriander, fennel, fig, hazelnuts, 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, honeydew, watermelon, zucchini, Echinacea, artichoke, dandelions, 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

*** These are potential associations. Not every patient allergic to pollen develops symptoms with cross-reactioning fruits or vegetables. Patients may react to a few but not all of the above.*

1. Adapted from FANN <http://www.foodallergy.org/page/oral-allergy-syndrome1>
2. Adapted from Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_allergy_syndrome