

Management of Oral Allergy Syndrome (OAS)

Background

Oral allergy syndrome (OAS), also called **pollen-food allergy syndrome**, is a type of food allergy where the body reacts to the proteins (allergen) found in raw (uncooked) fruits, vegetables, spices and nuts.

OAS can occur in people who have allergies to the proteins in pollens, from trees, grasses and weeds. The proteins in raw food and pollen look similar, so the body thinks the food proteins are dangerous and reacts to them, triggering OAS. OAS is more common in people who have asthma or hay fever.

OAS is diagnosed by checking for reactions after eating foods and seeing which foods trigger a reaction. In some cases, the doctor may do skin prick tests.

What happens when you have an OAS allergic reaction

OAS can be different for everyone. People may experience:

- Itching, tingling, swelling of the lips, tongue, roof of the mouth, throat and/or face after contact with raw trigger foods.
- Sometimes the hands can be swollen, itchy or tingling after touching raw trigger foods.
- OAS can cause anaphylaxis*, breathing difficulties and swelling of throat and tongue, but this is rare.

OAS may get worse during times of the year when pollen is at its highest levels. In Queensland, the most common pollens to cause OAS, and the time of year when pollens are at their highest levels, are:

- Birch: September, October, but not common in Queensland
- Ragweed: March, April, May
- Timothy Grass: January

Foods that trigger OAS

There are many foods that can trigger OAS. Some people may react to only one or two foods, while others may react to many foods. What happens when you develop OAS depends on which pollens you are allergic to. The most common pollen-food triggers are:

- Birch pollen: apple, stone fruit, pear, kiwi fruit, banana, celery, peanut, soy, almond, hazelnut.
- Timothy grass: peach, watermelon, orange, tomato, white potato.
- Ragweed: melon, banana, cucumber, white potato, zucchini.
- Mugwort: broccoli, cauliflower, capsicum, cabbage, garlic, onion, parsley, spices (aniseed, caraway, coriander, fennel, black pepper).

Reactions may also be very specific and not fall neatly into one pollen group. For example, someone could react to only one type of apple, but can tolerate all other types of apples.

Tips to help manage OAS

- Avoid eating the allergy food in its raw, uncooked form.
- Eat cooked, baked or canned vegetables and fruits. Cooking changes the foods proteins, so the body doesn't see them as an allergen.
- Thickly peel vegetables and fruit. The proteins that trigger OAS are often just under the skin of fruits and vegetables.
- Choose other fruits, vegetables, spices and nuts that do not cause symptoms.

Good nutrition

Choose foods from all food groups every day to make sure you meet all your nutrition needs.

For further information, go to:

1. **ASCIA** (The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy). ASCIA is the peak professional body of allergy and clinical immunology specialists in Australia and New Zealand. They have lots of resources available on their website to help with living with an allergy. See their website www.allergy.org.au for further details, including [Pollen calendar - guide to common allergenic pollen - Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy \(ASCIA\)](#), as well as the [OAS Frequently asked question](#)

2. **Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia (A&AA)**. A&AA is an Australian organisation that aims to improve awareness of allergies through education and research. They assist with managing allergies for individuals, families, schools, workplaces, the government and food industries in Australia. Check out their website www.allergyfacts.org.au for further information and to become a member of A&AA.

* A good description of what anaphylaxis can be found at <https://allergyfacts.org.au/allergy-anaphylaxis/what-is-anaphylaxis>

Disclaimer:

This resource provides information of the management of a diagnosed food allergy – it is not meant to replace advice from your doctor, allergy specialist or dietitian. The food and ingredient lists included in this resource are not exhaustive and may change. Individuals with food allergy should always check food labels each time a product is purchased.

For further information contact your Dietitian or Nutritionist: _____