

Oral Allergy Syndrome (OAS)

Information for Patients

Dermatology Department

What is Oral Allergy Syndrome (OAS)?

OAS, also known as pollen food syndrome, is caused by an allergy when certain foods such as fruits and vegetables come in to contact with the mouth. It is relatively common, affecting approximately 2% of the adult population.

What are the symptoms of OAS?

Symptoms occur within 1-10 minutes of eating the allergic food. They are often mild and will usually settle within 1 hour, without needing any treatment

Common mild symptoms

- Tingling or itching sensation in the mouth, lips, tongue and throat
- Hives around the mouth
- Itchy, watery eyes or itching inside the nose

Less common Mild/moderate symptoms

- Facial swelling
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Mild wheeziness

Rare symptoms (very unlikely to occur)

- Severe allergic reaction with difficulty breathing or collapse

If this happens, you should seek urgent medical advice (Call 999, or attend A&E straight away).

What causes OAS?

OAS is associated with an allergy to pollen in trees, grasses and weeds, which cause hayfever symptoms (itchy, watery eyes) in those affected. The structure of pollen proteins in these plants can be very similar to proteins in certain fruits, vegetables and nuts. However, the immune system doesn't always recognise the difference between the pollens in the trees, grasses or weeds that you breathe in and the pollen-like structures in the foods that you eat. With OAS, the immune system

recognizes the food protein as an allergen and creates an allergic response when it comes into contact with the mouth. This is called cross-reactivity. This phenomenon also occurs in those with natural rubber latex allergy, as the protein structure of latex is similar to the pollen structures in some fruits.

Which foods cause OAS?

Below is a table listing the most commonly reported foods causing OAS, grouped by the type of pollen or latex allergy they are associated with and the time of year the pollen is active. OAS.

Type of pollen or Latex	Associated foods		
Silver birch (causes hayfever in April)	Almond Apple Apricot Brazil nut Carrot Cashew nut Celery	Cherry Hazelnut Kiwi Mango Nectarine Onion Orange	Parsley Peach Pear Potato Tomato Walnut
Grasses (cause hayfever in July)	Bean Kiwi Lentil Melon	Pea Peanut Potato Tomato	Soya bean Wheat Watermelon
Mugwort weed (causes hayfever in August)	Banana Carrot Celery Chives	Coriander Fennel Melon Parsley	Parsnip Peanut
Ragweed (causes hayfever in September)	Banana Melon		
Latex	Avocado Banana Chestnut Citrus fruit Kiwi Grape	Mango Melon Papaya Passion fruit Peach Peanut	Peppers Pineapple Plum Tomato

How do I manage OAS?

The main way of managing OAS is to avoid foods which cause allergic symptoms. If you are allergic to one food in the above groups, you do not necessarily need to avoid all the other foods in that group, unless you develop a reaction.

Top Tip! Raw fruits and vegetables are more likely to cause a reaction. Most people with OAS can tolerate well-cooked or processed fruits and vegetables. It may be worth trying foods cooked, microwaved or canned.

Top Tip! Food particles can be released in to the air when preparing food e.g. peeling, which can cause skin irritation and itchy eyes. If this happens, it may be helpful to peel the fruit/ vegetables underwater or wear gloves.

What treatments are available?

If you do come in to contact with a food you are allergic to and develop a reaction, you should stop eating the food and the symptoms will usually resolve by themselves with an hour. To help treat the symptoms, you can take an antihistamine tablet such as cetirizine, loratadine or fexofenadine, which can be bought over the counter in many shops.

What is the outlook for OAS?

OAS is usually life-long and you may become allergic to more foods over time. The best thing to do is to keep a list of foods you have a reaction to and to avoid these. It is a good idea to keep a supply of antihistamines at hand if needed to treat a reaction. Most people with OAS will find they can manage their condition well with this strategy and that it does not cause any significant problems.

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg".**