

Alpa Jani, MD

Pollen-Food Syndrome

Pollen-Food Syndrome is diagnosed when a patient describes itching, tingling, or mild swelling isolated to the lips, mouth or throat (without further allergic symptoms) when eating certain fresh foods. This patient would typically have a history of seasonal allergies as well. Pollen-Food Syndrome happens when a protein in the fresh food looks similar to (cross-reacts with) a pollen. Thus the body's immune system reacts similarly to that protein as it would to the pollen, with an allergic reaction. Below is a list of foods that can cross-react with pollens in this way.

Birch	Cedar	Grass	Ragweed	Mugwort
Almond	Apple	Carrot	Banana	Aniseed
Apple	Bell pepper	Celery	Cantaloupe	Bell Pepper
Apricot	Cherry	Fig	Cucumber	Black Pepper
Carrot	Kiwi	Cantaloupe	Honeydew	Broccoli
Celery	Paprika	Honeydew	Watermelon	Cabbage
Cherry	Tomato	Watermelon	Zucchini	Cantaloupe
Fig		Potato		Carrot
Hazel		Peanut		Cauliflower
Peach		Tomato		Celery
Peanut		Chard		Chamomile
Pear		Orange		Garlic
Potato				Leek
Plum				Mango
Spices*				Mustard
Soybean				Onion
				Paprika
				Peach
				Spices*

The allergic proteins from these foods are typically broken down by the saliva, or by heating. This explains why most of these reactions are limited to the mouth area, and also why the cooked fruit or vegetable is usually okay to eat. This may not apply to some of the foods on this list, such as nuts. And rarely, the reactions can be more severe, so you should discuss exact recommendations with your doctor.