Cedar Fever Checklist

A one-page plan for the December through February cedar season in Central Texas — what the pollen is doing, what your symptoms mean, and when to stop guessing.

Know the calendar

- ☐ **Late Dec–Jan:** Ashe juniper (cedar) peaks on dry, windy days. Rain clears the air for a few hours, then counts climb again.
- ☐ **Feb:** Cedar tapers; elm and ash pick up.
- ☐ **Mar–Apr:** Oak, then pecan. Oak is the heavy yellow dust on cars.
- ☐ **Apr–Jun:** Grass pollen — Bermuda, Timothy, rye.
- ☐ **Aug–Oct:** Ragweed and fall elm.
- ☐ **Nov–Dec:** Cedar returns. Symptoms before Christmas are usually cedar, not a cold.

Tell cedar from a cold

- ☐ **Itchy eyes and roof of mouth:** classic allergy. Colds rarely itch.
- ☐ **Clear, watery runny nose:** allergy. Thick or colored mucus leans infection.
- ☐ **Fever, body aches, sore throat:** more likely viral.
- ☐ **Timing:** allergy symptoms track the pollen count and repeat at the same hour each day.
- ☐ **Duration:** a cold resolves in 7–10 days; allergy symptoms last weeks while the count stays up.

What actually helps

- ☐ **Check the count first:** pollen.com or a local forecast. Plan outdoor errands for the lowest hour.
- ☐ **Close windows and recirculate:** in the car and at home during peak hours.
- ☐ **Shower and change after outdoor time:** pollen rides on hair and clothing.
- ☐ **Saline rinse:** distilled, sterile, or previously boiled water only — never straight tap.
- ☐ **HEPA filter:** one in the bedroom, run overnight.
- ☐ **OTC antihistamine:** follow the label or ask the pharmacist about drowsiness and interactions.
- ☐ **Nasal steroid spray:** works best started 1–2 weeks before your worst month, not on the worst day.

See a clinician when

- ☐ Symptoms last more than 2–3 weeks despite OTC treatment.
- ☐ You get repeat sinus infections or facial pressure.
- ☐ You use a rescue inhaler more than twice a week.
- ☐ You want to reduce long-term medication or discuss allergy testing.

> **Red flags:** trouble breathing, wheezing that does not settle, high fever, or swelling of the face or lips — seek urgent care or call 911.

General information for Texas readers, not medical advice. If this is an emergency, call 911. For mental health crisis support, call or text 988.