

POLLEN ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL MEASURES

One in five people in the United States suffer from pollen-related hay fever. Pollens are tiny, seed-like grains which are released by trees, grasses and weeds in order for these plants to reproduce. These grains are carried by the wind or insects and can travel for hundreds of miles. One square mile of ragweed (one of the top pollen producers) yields up to 16 tons of pollen and can be blown up to 250 miles away. Wind borne pollen can easily get into your eyes, nose, or lungs, causing havoc to your system. Insect borne pollen is generally too large to get into the system and cause an allergic response. For this reason, trees that flower, like dogwoods, do not cause allergies.

Tree pollen is prevalent in early spring; grass pollen from late spring through mid-summer in the Midwest, and longer in the Southern states. Ragweed, as well as others weeds, pollinates in late summer and may last until the first hard frost in the Midwest. The following measures may help in reducing symptoms when pollen counts are particularly high.

- ✓ Check the local pollen forecast daily. When the counts are high, avoid outdoor activities. Counts are a reflection of what was in the air 1-2 days before the actual date the pollen count was measured.
- ✓ Keep the home closed during pollen season.
- ✓ Use central air-conditioning whenever possible. Leave the fan running so air is continuously circulated through the filters.
- ✓ Re-circulate air conditioning in the car, as well.
- ✓ Do NOT use an attic fan during pollen season, as it draws outside, pollen-filled air into the home.
- ✓ Wear glasses to avoid getting pollen in the eyes.
- ✓ Save outdoor activities for after a rain, when pollen has been washed out of the air, but also keep in mind that some molds release their spores into the air on rainy days or when humidity is high (which may cause symptoms for those who are mold-sensitive).
- ✓ After being outdoors, shower and wash your hair, change clothes, and place dirty clothes in a hamper outside the bedroom.
- ✓ Wear a mask when doing yard work, but try to avoid this during your particular allergy season.
- ✓ Use antihistamines as needed, but avoid using antihistamines that cause drowsiness while operating machinery or driving a car.
- ✓ Pets can bring pollen into the home on their bodies, so bathe them regularly.
- ✓ Get tested for allergies and start treatment.
- ✓ Using an air filter to help purify the air is beneficial.

You can check the pollen and mold counts at the National Allergy Bureau website at:
<http://www.aaaai.org/global/nab-pollen-counts>