

## Mass Lung & Allergy, PC

# Pollen Allergy

### Pollen counts

A pollen count is a measure of how much pollen is in the air. This count represents the concentration of all the pollen (or of one particular type, like ragweed) in the air in a certain area at a specific time. It is expressed in grains of pollen per square meter of air collected over 24 hours. Pollen counts tend to be highest early in the morning on warm, dry, breezy days and lowest during chilly, wet periods.



## Pollen Allergy

Hay fever (Allergic Rhinitis) is the most common of the allergic diseases and refers to seasonal nasal symptoms that are due to pollens. One of the most obvious features of pollen allergy is its seasonal nature; people experience symptoms only when the pollen grains to which they are allergic are in the air. Each plant has a pollinating period that is more or less the same from year to year. Plants produce microscopic pollen grains to reproduce. In some species, the plant uses the pollen from its own flowers to fertilize itself. Other types must be cross-pollinated; that is, in order for fertilization to take place and seeds to form, pollen must be transferred from the flower of one plant to that of another plant of the same species. Insects do this job for certain flowering plants, while other plants rely on wind transport. The

types of pollen that most commonly cause allergic reactions are produced by the plain-looking plants that do not have showy flowers. These plants manufacture small, light, dry pollen grains that are ideal wind transport. Because airborne pollen is carried for long distances, it does little good to rid an area of an offending plant as the pollen can drift in from many miles away. Among North American plants, weeds are the most prolific producers of allergenic pollen. Ragweed is the major culprit; a single ragweed plant can generate a million grains of pollen a day. Colorful or scented flowers have large, heavy, waxy pollen grains. This type of pollen is not carried by wind but by insects such as butterflies and bees, and is not typically a cause of seasonal allergy. Similarly, the heavy, very visible pine pollen, is usually not a significant cause of symptoms.



**Spring allergies** are a result of pollen from trees, which typically start pollinating from March to April, depending on the climate. In some areas, some weeds will also pollinate in the springtime. **Late spring and early summer allergy** is typically due to grass pollen. **Late summer and early fall** is primarily due to the effects of weed pollen. In some areas of the world, some trees can pollinate in the fall as well.

### Important Pollens

#### Trees

Maple  
Birch  
Hickory  
Oak  
Cedar  
Elm  
Cottonwood

#### Grasses

Timothy  
Kentucky bluegrass  
Orchard

#### Weeds

Ragweed  
Pigweed  
Lamb's Quarter  
Plantain  
Cocklebur  
Dock

## Avoiding Pollen

- Keep windows and outside doors shut during pollen season.
- Use central or room A/C, so you can keep windows and outside doors shut
- Consider pollen counts when planning outdoor activities. It may help to limit your outdoor activities during the times of highest pollen counts. Outdoor activities

may be better tolerated after a gentle, sustained rain.

- Encourage hand washing after outdoor play to avoid transferring pollen from the hands to the eyes and nose.
- If you are outdoors during pollen season, take a shower and wash your hair, change your clothes (not in your bedroom), and leave these clothes in the laundry room.

### Check the Pollen count:

[www.aaaai.org/nab/index.cfm?p=pollen](http://www.aaaai.org/nab/index.cfm?p=pollen)

- Dry laundry in a dryer only; avoid hanging clothes outside to dry.
- Drive with your windows closed. If it is hot, use your air conditioner.
- Keep pets that spend time outdoors out of the bedroom. In addition to animal dander, they may carry and deposit pollen stuck to their fur.