

Living The Good Life

Spring allergy season soon will bring sneezing

Spring allergy season hit the East Coast hard last year. With the amount of pollen floating in the air four times greater than what observers consider to be high, East Coast allergy sufferers were left wondering what hit them.

People who normally wouldn't even notice the change of season experienced watery eyes and sneezing. Allergy sufferers all too familiar with the perils of high pollen counts were forced indoors, giving up visits to the park or a pick-up game of basketball because the sneezing, stuffiness and general misery of allergy symptoms were overwhelming.

Whether pollen counts will be high again this year or settle back into what is considered to be a normal range remains to be seen. Seasonally, and daily, weather conditions impact pollen counts, making it difficult to predict pollen counts more than a few days in advance.

"On windy days, or for days after high winds, pollen counts are high because the pollen has been spread throughout the air," said Gillian Shepherd, MD, FAACAI, chair of the Education Sub-Committee of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. "After it rains, counts drop as the rain washes the pollen away."

Pollen is measured in grains per cubic meter. For trees, 1,500 grains per cubic meter

is considered very high. Last spring, areas of the East Coast measured 6,000 grains per cubic meter.

Though high pollen counts can affect numerous types of allergies, from eye allergies (conjunctivitis) to skin reactions (dermatitis), the most common spring

allergy is allergic rhinitis.

Frequently called hay fever, seasonal allergic rhinitis affects 35 million people in the United States. It is triggered by "allergens," substances that initiate an allergic response, such as pollens or molds.

When people who have allergic rhinitis inhale these allergens, they combine with an allergic antibody called immunoglobulin E (IgE). Normally present at very low levels in the body, IgE is found in larger quantities in people who have allergies.

"When the allergen and the IgE combine in the lining of the nose or eyes, the result is the release of chemicals, including histamine. These chemicals cause the allergic symptoms of sneezing, itching, watery eyes, nasal congestion or headaches as the body tries to fight off the foreign allergen," Shepherd said.

Seasonal allergies have a large impact on not just quality of life, but the economy. Missed work days because of allergies cost U.S. companies more than \$250 million a year.

"Allergies, particularly in the spring have a huge impact across the country. Fortunately, medical treatment is usually very effective," Shepherd said.

For more information about allergies and similar subjects, visit the American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology website, www.aaaai.org.



Molly Ivins Speaks

Mary Tyler "Molly" Ivins was born on August 30, 1944 and died on January 31, 2007. She was an American newspaper columnist, political commentator and best selling author.

Neighbor Robert Megginson tells the Beachwood Voice, "I'd been reading Miss Molly Ivins for the last 15-16 years, Arianna and Mo Dowd about ten years each. Along with the lady I sleep with they've been the three strongest influences of my 'middle' years. (I only read one male columnist, Frank Rich.) A lot of ups and downs, laughs and frowns, but there was always Molly there to steer us back to the righteous path. We thought we'd lost her a couple of years ago, when the cancer sidelined her, but she came back, feisty 'n sassy as ever. Only now she's gone am I beginning to recognize the size of the hole in all our lives. One thing sure, whatever they carve on her headstone won't come close to cuttin' Molly's mustard."

A few of Molly's observations—

"Satire is traditionally the weapon of the powerless against the powerful."

"It's hard to argue against cynics—they always sound smarter than optimists because they have so much evidence on their side."

"Many people did not care for Pat Buchanan's speech; it probably sounded better in the original German," on Buchanan's speech at the 1992 Republican convention.

"What you need is sustained outrage...there's far too much unthinking respect given to authority."

"Being slightly paranoid is like being slightly pregnant—it tends to get worse."

"Trust me, I've traveled with the boy—he's dumber than advertising," on then Texas Governor George W. Bush.

"So keep fightin' for freedom and justice, beloveds, but don't you forget to have fun doin' it."



Lord, let your laughter ring forth. Be outrageous, ridicule the fraidy-cats, rejoice in all the oddities that freedom can produce. And when you get through kickin' ass and celebratin' the sheer joy of a good fight, be sure to tell those who come after how much fun it was," quoted by John Nichols for The Nation.

—Editor

"What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty or democracy?"

—Mohandas Gandhi

"Moral excellence comes about as a result of habit. We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts."—Aristotle