



# High Pollen Count Means Bad Allergies This Season

**It's Going to Be a Rough Season for Those With Allergies**

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For the 50 million Americans who suffer from [allergies](#), this year's beautiful spring has felt especially ... miserable.

"This is the worst I've ever experienced my allergies -- the worst, hands down," Kelly Miller of Atlanta said. "It's like the worse cold you've ever had that just won't go away with cold medicine."

She's suffering because spring came late, her doctor said. Parts of the country that were covered in snow just a few weeks ago suddenly are seeing record warm temperatures, and all the different trees, flowers and grasses are "sharing their love" at about the same time.

"Right now, it's a very bad pollen season for people with pollen [allergies](#)," said Dr. Stanley Fineman of the Atlanta Allergy and Asthma Clinic. "We're seeing people come in who are complaining of feeling run down and tired. There's sneezing. Their eyes are itching. Some people are coughing. They are really affected by the pollen."

From Dallas to Delaware, the pollen is thick.

In Jackson, Miss., they're watching it blow from the trees.

Miller and other allergy sufferers in the Atlanta area all went running to their doctors.

"You're exhausted, you've got congestion, you can't breathe very well," said one allergy sufferer, Amanda Osborne. "You don't want to go outside because your eyes itch, your nose is all runny, headaches. It's horrible."

"And your throat itches," added another, Heather Carmen. "It's pretty miserable."

Early every morning, scientists in Marietta, Ga., pull a white box down from the top of a building and count the pollen inside.

Anything more than 120 particles per cubic foot is considered extremely high.

Today, they found 5,733 particles, the highest in years and just short of an all-time record.

This is the time of year when allergy sufferers are hit the hardest, but scientists insist this year is special.

"The pollen this year is out in full force," said Amanda Campbell, a botanist at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. "And a couple of reasons for that ... [are that] there was a very cold long winter ... [a] relatively wet year last year, very wet winter in many parts of the country and now we have a compressed bloom season."

## What's Happening?

In addition to swinging temperatures, the experts blame the heavy rains that have drenched the North and Southeast. Those areas seem to be teeming with pollen right now.

"It's a reproduction explosion right now with pollen everywhere," Campbell said. "That's the key, is the concentration of the pollen that's out there right now. That's what makes this year unique and probably a little harder on people than maybe the past couple of years."

Doctors are telling patients with severe allergies to stay indoors.

"Stay in air conditioning," Fineman said. "Make sure they wash their hair before they go to sleep at night, because pollen can collect there. ... You don't want to leave the clothes you wore outside in the park in your bedroom. And also, we do recommend you leave your shoes either outside, you know, or inside the door and take them off when you come inside, so you don't trek the pollen throughout your house."

There are also other treatment options. Nasal sprays and antihistamines can help depending on the allergies and the time of day. But doctors say patients should start using them early and continue using them throughout the pollen season. Avoid skipping the medication on days when the pollen subsides.

Doctors say it's also important for patients to know what particular allergens cause the most irritation. On certain days, when the pollen count is low, there still could be extremely high amounts of oak in the air, for example.

In most parts of the country, this year's pollen season is so concentrated, even a short day of rain might not be enough to clear the air for long.

"It's going to [get worse](#) before it gets better," Campbell says.

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