

TO: All Principals

SUBJECT: General Information on the Reported Increased Pollen Count

According to the Allergy and Asthma experts, due to the spring-like temperatures, we are experiencing a record amount of pollen in the air across metro Atlanta. In fact, doctors are saying, "it's the most pollen we have seen on record in the month of February." Based on the recent high pollen counts, medical experts are anticipating an earlier and busy allergy season. With this in mind, we are sharing the following general information on pollen, allergies and asthma.

**General Information on Pollen, Allergies and Asthma:**

Pollen counts tend to be highest early in the morning on warm, dry, breezy days and lowest during chilly, wet times. The good news is, Pollen allergies are seasonal which means you will only experience symptoms when those particles are in the air. When suffering from allergic rhinitis/pollen allergies, the body's natural defense attempts to 'fight off' the pollen, in turn causing all of the miserable symptoms many know too well - runny nose, congestion, scratchy throat, and watery eyes. You can check pollen counts daily through your local news stations and/or sign-up to receive daily pollen count information.

**Allowing students to stay indoors when the pollen count is high and/or as indicated by medical experts is an important preventive measure for schools.**

Seasonal allergies may also trigger asthma and can mimic the common cold. In fact, there are common threads between seasonal allergies and asthma. The symptoms that are produced by allergies can be the same symptoms that are produced by asthma, and asthma can be triggered by pollen. Although, there is no real cure for seasonal allergies, it is possible to reduce a child's symptoms. The best way to do this is to avoid exposure to allergens whenever possible. The following are some additional tips to share with parents of students who have seasonal allergies (especially if they also have asthma):

- See your Healthcare Provider - your doctor may also suggest medications (or additional medications) to control your child's symptoms. Take prescribed and/or over the counter medications as indicated.
- If you suspect your child suffers from seasonal allergies, request allergy testing to help identify their specific allergies.
- If your child is allergic to pollen, keep all car and house windows closed and use the air conditioning during pollen season.
- Be aware of the pollen count for your child's allergies and take precautions if the counts are high. If your child also has asthma, he/she may need pretreatment before playing outside on high-pollen days. Pollen counts can be found on several of the local news station websites and/or on the following websites: <https://www.pollen.com/forecast/current/pollen> or <http://www.atlantaallergy.com/>

In addition, most allergy sufferers can get relief from allergy symptoms by making the following changes in and around their home:

- Keep the windows closed and run the air conditioner during allergy season
- Stay indoors when pollen counts are high
- Use an air purifier with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter in your bedroom
- Change your clothes and wash your hands after coming home on a high-pollen day

- Take a shower and wash your hair before going to bed
- Clean and dust your home regularly and use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter

The following is the link to CHOA's website on asthma and allergies: <http://www.choa.org/Child-Health-Glossary/H/HO/Home-Page---Allergy-Asthma-and-Immunology> and parents can click on the following website to read more information about seasonal allergies and other allergies:

<http://www.choa.org/Child-Health-Glossary/Parents-KidsHealth/Allergies>

**As mentioned earlier, there are several sources that you can use to check the pollen count and air quality. The following are two of the most common websites to check the pollen count and air quality:**

[http://www.atlantaallergy.com/pollen\\_counts](http://www.atlantaallergy.com/pollen_counts) or <http://www.cleanaircampaign.org/>

You can also receive automatic updates on Smog Alert information by signing-up on the Mothers & Others for Clean Air website at: <http://www.mothersandothersforcleanair.org/sign-up-for-alerts/>

We hope this information is helpful but it is not intended to be a substitute for consultation with a healthcare provider.

Thank you.

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