



Spring Pollen, Allergies, and Asthma Update

March 2023

The Atlanta Allergy & Asthma said it best, “You know it’s coming – as the season changes and temperatures begin to rise, so will the pollen count! In fact, this year we are already seeing an early record number of days the pollen count was in an extremely high range.

With the spring-like temperatures, the increase in the amount of pollen in the air will be apparent across metro Atlanta. In a news release on March 6th, Atlanta, Allergy & Asthma shared, “with today’s count, this is the earliest the count has reached the extremely high range in over 30 years of pollen data.” This often occurs in Atlanta and the southeast leading up to Spring because the warmer temperatures encourage trees like Juniper, Elm, and Birch, to release pollens that we normally do not see until the later spring months. The pollen count will likely continue to climb throughout April. It is with this in mind, we are sharing the following general information on pollen, allergies, and asthma as we have for the last several years.

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 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 (See information below).

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.

Additionally, most allergy sufferers can get relief from allergy symptoms by making the following changes in and around their home and while at school:

- Keep the windows closed and run the air conditioner during allergy season – in your car and house/school
- Stay indoors when pollen counts are high – avoid outdoor activities until early evening. Pollen counts tend to be highest in the morning.
- Use an air purifier with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter in your home and make sure to change or clean air filters regularly
- Change your clothes and wash your hands after coming from outside on a high-pollen day
- Wipe off pets when they come inside
- Shower before going to bed or when you get home. Pollen can settle into your hair and onto your skin and clothes.
- Clean and dust your home regularly and use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter
- If you have outdoor plans, take your allergy medication before going out. Do not wait until you have symptoms.

According to Atlanta Allergy & Asthma, the five most common mistakes in treating spring allergies include treating symptoms without knowing their specific cause, treating after the symptoms start, spending money on over-the-counter medications with no relief, not avoiding triggers, and eating produce that can trigger spring allergy symptoms. Another mistake is not seeing a medical provider.

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/healthcare provider may 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. See a healthcare provider. There are new treatment options available.
- If your child is allergic to pollen, keep all car and house windows closed and use the air conditioning during pollen season to prevent triggering an asthma attack.
- 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/map/ga> or <http://www.atlantaallergy.com/>

The following is a link to the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta website on Taking Control of Seasonal Allergies:

<https://www.choa.org/parent-resources/allergy/managing-seasonal-allergies-in-kids>

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 or <https://airgeorgia.org/AtlantaForecast.html>

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/> or Georgia Commute Options / SMOG Alert Sign Up at: <https://gacommuteoptions.com/about-us/what-we-do/reduce-air-pollution> or <https://gacommuteoptions.com/smog-alert-sign-up/>

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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