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Scientists confirm allergy season really is getting longer, more severe

Air Quality News from IQAir, the world leader in air purifiers.

You are using an air purifier in the bedroom more frequently. You keep the windows closed and avoid the familiar triggers of your spring allergies whenever and wherever you can. But some days the sneezing starts as soon as you leave the house. And you wonder, "Is it just my imagination, or are my allergies actually starting earlier and getting worse every year?" The answer seems to be exactly what your sinuses and lungs are already telling you – Allergy season is getting longer and more intense every year. And 2013 is no exception. In fact, late winter precipitation and early warm temperatures have combined to start spring allergies about two weeks earlier than usual, according to experts.



Scientists confirm allergy season is coming sooner and hitting harder than in the past.

Latest research on allergy season

Medical researchers at Harvard Medical School and elsewhere have found that pollen production from ragweed and other plants is increasing over time, largely as a result of earlier spring weather caused by global warming. Studies show that in the last 10-15 years ragweed season (in the autumn) has already increased by four weeks. Meanwhile, the beginning of the allergy season is being stretched. The official pollen season began on April 14 in 2000; by 2040 that date will be adjusted to April 8, says allergy researcher Leonard Bielory of Rutgers University.

Pollen counts are also on the rise. Bielory predicts that average pollen counts in the year 2040 will be 21,735 grains of pollen per cubic meter, versus 8,455 in 2000. That's a 156% increase. Other researchers including the National Academy of Sciences agree.

The American Lung Association in California reports that the warming atmosphere is meanwhile also causing increased ozone levels in the atmosphere, more smog and more particulates in the air, frequent and longer-lasting heat waves and more frequent wildfires. Hardest hit by the combination of high pollen counts and poor air quality are the large number of Americans who experience allergies and live in areas affected by both poor air quality. When poor air quality and higher pollen counts overlap, the symptoms of allergy sufferers are triggered in a "perfect storm" of pollen and pollution.

Use an air purifier, monitor pollen and ozone levels

Pollens from trees and grasses are the leading seasonal allergy triggers in the spring, while ragweed pollen is the biggest culprit in the autumn. All types of pollen become airborne particulates, so an air purifier is an effective tool in managing seasonal allergies. The effectiveness of an air purifier is largely related to filter efficiency and airflow, and the IQAir New Edition HealthPro series of air purifiers and the whole-house Perfect 16 system are widely recognized as the #1 rated air purifiers to fight allergies and asthma, with efficiency rates and airflow levels that are unrivaled. They are also the only air purifiers proven effective against tiny ultrafine particles that represent 90% of all airborne pollutants.

Allergy sufferers should remain aware of pollen levels on a daily basis during allergy seasons by checking local online sources. They should also monitor ozone closely by checking the website of the local air quality agency, and be prepared for allergies to flare up, especially when ozone and pollen levels rise together.

This online publication is brought to you by The IQAir Group, which develops innovative air quality solutions for indoor environments around the globe. IQAir is the exclusive educational partner of the American Lung Association for the air purifier industry.