

**Doctor's Bag**



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**SWINE FLU UPDATE**

As you may know, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has implemented its emergency response in regard to the recent outbreak of swine flu. This mechanism allows the agency to help health care providers, public health officials and the public address the challenges posed by the virus.

Influenza is thought to spread from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing. The CDC recommends the following preventive measures:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

If you or a family member experience flu-like symptoms, do not panic. Call your doctor for information and guidance. You can also obtain daily updates and information about swine flu directly from the CDC at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

**NCPPOInfo** YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO HEALTH CARE AWARENESS

**Spring is in the Air!**

Pollen allergy, or hay fever, is one of the most common chronic diseases in the United States. According to The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, scientists think that some people inherit a tendency to be allergic from one or both parents.

**What is Pollen?**

Plants create tiny round or oval pollen grains in order to reproduce. In some species, the plant uses the pollen from its own flowers to fertilize itself. Other types must be cross-pollinated – for fertilization to occur, pollen must be transferred from the flower of one plant to that of another of the same species. Insects do the job for some plants while others rely on the wind.



**What is a Pollen Count?**

A pollen count is a measure of how much pollen is in the air. This count represents the concentration of all the pollen (or of one particular type) in the air in a certain area at a specific time. It is shown in grains of pollen per square meter of air collected in 24 hours. Pollen counts tend to be highest early in the morning on warm, dry, breezy days and lowest during wet, chilly periods.

**How to Avoid Hay Fever**

Moving to a place where the offending allergens do not grow is not always the answer. People allergic to ragweed may leave their ragweed-ridden communities and relocate to areas where ragweed does not grow, only to develop allergies to other weeds or even to grasses or trees in their new surroundings. Here are some more realistic options for reducing exposure to offending pollens:

- Remain indoors with the windows closed in the morning when the outdoor pollen levels are highest. Sunny, windy days can be especially troublesome.
- If you must be outdoors, wear a face mask designed to filter pollen out of the air and keep it from reaching your nasal passages.
- Take your vacation at the height of the expected pollination period and choose a location where such exposure would be minimal.

**DidUKnow?**

- Some 35 million Americans suffer from upper respiratory tract symptoms that are allergic reactions to airborne allergens.
- Some people with allergic reactions to pollen have seen their symptoms drop significantly within 12 months of starting immunotherapy. Check with your doctor to see if immunotherapy might be appropriate for you.
- The respiratory symptoms of asthma, which affect approximately 11 million Americans, are often provoked by airborne allergens.
- A single ragweed plant can generate one million grains of pollen a day.

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America's list of the top 10 Spring Allergy Capitals for 2009 includes:

1. Louisville KY
2. Knoxville TN
3. Charlotte NC
4. Madison WI
5. Wichita KS
6. McAllen TX
7. Greensboro NC
8. Dayton OH
9. Little Rock AR
10. Augusta GA

These ratings are based on seasonal pollen counts, allergy medicine use per patient and the number of board-certified allergists per patient.

**Newsletter Information Sources**

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, "2009 Spring Allergy Capitals;" U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Service; eMedTV "Health Information Brought to Life," (allergies.emedtv.com); National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health ([www.niaid.nih.gov](http://www.niaid.nih.gov))

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