

Pollen allergy

Pollen grains are released from certain grasses, weeds and trees. They are coated in proteins that can trigger allergic reactions, commonly asthma and hayfever.

People can have both asthma and hayfever, making management more difficult (for more information on the relationship between them refer to the brochure: 'Allergic rhinitis and your asthma'.)

Spring and summer can often be difficult times for people with allergic conditions. The height of grass pollen season is from late September to Christmas. The highest amount of pollen can be found in the air between 6.00am and noon.

Although pollen can be carried long distances, most pollen is deposited within a short distance of the plant it comes from. The highest pollen counts occur on calm, hot, sunny days.

Thunderstorms can cause problems for people with pollen allergy. When pollen granules come into contact with water, starch granules are released that are small enough to be breathed in. These can trigger hayfever and asthma.

Which pollens?

Generally airborne pollen comes from imported grasses, weeds and trees that are pollinated by the wind. Plants that are pollinated by birds and bees carrying the pollen are not usually a problem (although their scent can still be a trigger).

To find out more see our Breathe Better Garden and Breathe Better Plants information sheets.

Reducing pollen exposure

Avoidance of pollen is difficult but the following may help:

- Remain indoors when possible if the pollen count is high, on windy days or after thunderstorms
- Use re-circulated air in the car when pollen levels are high
- Avoid activities that expose you to pollen, such as mowing the lawn.
- Shower after activities when you are exposed to pollen
- It is not advisable to hang your washing outside on a windy day when the pollen count is high. Pollens are airborne and can stick to the washing and be brought inside

One way to try and plan for the times when pollens are high is to take note of the pollen count. This is like having an advance warning, enabling you to plan or change your activities.

What is the pollen count?

Asthma Foundation SA's Pollen Count is available every day. Samples of the air are analysed to gauge how much pollen is airborne and whether the level is considered high or low. The sample is taken in a particular part of the city, but is still considered accurate for metropolitan Adelaide. The count is then made available on the website at asthmasa.org.au, in **The Advertiser** newspaper, on **Channel 9 News** weather reports and on Asthma Foundation SA's Twitter (@AsthmaSA) and Facebook pages.

How is the pollen count measured?

The pollen is classified into three main categories:

Low = less than 50/cubic metre of air

Moderate = 50 – 100

High = 101 - 179

Extreme = over 180

The higher the pollen count, the greater the chance of symptoms presenting themselves. However, it is important to remember that the pollen count is a gauge only. Specific sensitivities to certain pollens may still be present, even if the overall count is low.

What if the pollen count is high?

If the count is estimated to be high, then it is important to be prepared. This may involve cancelling certain activities such as a day out in the garden or modifying practices such as not hanging the washing up outside.

Also, ensure you are taking your allergy medication as prescribed and use before exposure to pollens. People with asthma should always have reliever medication with them at all times. Learn what to do in an emergency if you have asthma.

For more information contact
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