

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ragweed Season

Each year approximately 36 million Americans suffer from hay fever with amazing regularity. They develop spasms of sneezing, a stuffed-up, runny, itchy nose, itchy and swollen eyes, and itching and mucus in the throat. For many people in the Miami Valley, these symptoms start each year in mid-August.

Hay fever, also known as allergic rhinitis, occurs in susceptible individuals when airborne pollen and mold spores are inhaled. These substances are completely harmless to the non-allergic individual. The pollens that cause seasonal hay fever are primarily produced by trees in the spring, grasses in early summer, and ragweed in late summer.

Ragweed is the most significant pollen causing hay fever in the United States, primarily because of the large number of people sensitive to it, and because of the enormous volumes of pollen in some areas during late summer and fall. Ragweed is found in abundance in the Miami Valley and is the major cause of hay fever in the Dayton/Springfield area. Shorter days and longer nights that start in mid-August stimulate pollination in the ragweed plant. This results in a continuing emergence of ragweed pollen for many areas in the United States from August to October. A frost kills ragweed and usually ends the season for most sufferers.

The severity of hay fever depends on the amount of pollen in the air and the degree of sensitivity of the person. On cloudy, windless or rainy days, the average patient may have fewer symptoms due to little pollination and dissemination of the pollen. When the weather becomes hot, dry, sunny and windy, symptoms may return in full force.

The RAPCA recommends the following tips to help allergy sufferers reduce their exposure to ragweed:

- Keep windows closed to prevent pollen from drifting into your home.
- Use air conditioning, which cleans, cools and dries the air.
- Minimize outdoor activity when pollen counts are high. Peak pollen times are usually between 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

- Keep your car windows closed when traveling.
- Take a shower after spending time outside - pollen can collect on your hair and skin.
- Don't hang sheets or clothing outside to dry. Pollens can collect on them.

In addition to sneezing and itchy, watery eyes, ragweed allergies can also cause symptoms of oral allergy syndrome (OAS). Oral allergy syndrome causes people with seasonal allergies to experience a worsening of allergy symptoms after consuming fresh fruits or vegetables. Itchiness of the mouth and throat with mild swelling are common symptoms of OAS. Common foods that cause OAS in people with ragweed allergy include bananas, cucumbers, zucchinis and melons.

RAPCA can also help allergy sufferers take the first step toward avoiding exposure to the pollen and mold spores they are allergic to by reading the pollen and spore counts on the RAPCA web page (<http://www.rapca.org>). RAPCA reports daily pollen and mold counts Monday through Friday to area news media. The readings measure the amount of pollen found during the previous 24-hour period--from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.

During this ragweed season, or any time you are suffering from allergic symptoms, make sure to see your allergist/immunologist, who will work with you to determine the treatment that's best for you. Treatment for ragweed allergy includes allergy shots, which are effective in up to 90 percent of patients. If you need help finding an allergist visit the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology at <http://www.aaaai.org> or call 1-800-822-2762 for a physician referral.

Should you have any questions about pollen and mold please contact RAPCA at 225-4435.

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