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**Air It Out – Electronic Version. Vol. 16, Issue 8, #1 August 2009**

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**DO YOU THINK YOUR RAGWEED ALLERGY IS WORSE THEN EVER?**

\* Are you sneezing a lot? Stuffy headed? Are your eyes red, puffy and itching? Are you either congested or looking for a tissue to blow your constantly runny nose? If so, chances are you have **seasonal hay fever** also called **ragweed allergy** since these symptoms usually occur at this time of the year when ragweed is in bloom.

\* If you're one of the 36 million Americans with ragweed allergy and you think your allergy **symptoms are worse then ever**, you're not imagining it. According to the AAAAI, (American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology) global warming **climate change is making ragweed allergy worse** then ever. Global warming, which raises temperatures and increases carbon dioxide levels is resulting in a longer ragweed season and more concentrated pollen counts. This recent study predicts it will get worse, too. The growing season is now longer then ever and these higher CO2 levels cause pollen production to increase up to 90% for some varieties of ragweed.

\* The AAAAI data says **one ragweed plant** can produce **one BILLION pollen grains in one growing season** and these pollen grains are so light even a slight breeze can **carry them 400 miles**. There is no place to hide from this allergen.

\* To make it worse, for many who suffer with ragweed allergy, they are **also affected by cross-reactivity reactions** to certain foods. **Eating foods that are chemically similar to ragweed** can not only make your congestion, runny nose or sneezing worse, but it can cause symptoms of an itching, tingling or swollen tongue, mouth or throat during ragweed allergy season. Cooking the offending foods may help some, but it's best to just avoid these foods during the allergy season. If you have **ragweed allergy** you **may also be sensitive to** bananas, cantaloupes, watermelon, honeydew, cucumbers, zucchini and even sunflower seeds or chamomile tea but might be able to eat them with no allergy symptoms when ragweed isn't in bloom.

\* If you have a **birch pollen allergy**, one of the most prevalent spring pollen allergens, you **may have a reaction to** apples, apricots, cherries, kiwis, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, tomatoes, carrots, celery, green peppers, parsnips, peas, potatoes, anise, caraway, cumin, dill, fennel, parsley, almonds, hazelnuts, peanuts, walnuts and sunflower seeds in the spring. Are you **allergic to grass pollen**? Then you may have **cross-reactivity symptoms to** foods that include kiwis, melons, oranges, tomatoes and celery from spring through fall.

\* How can you **combat ragweed allergy**? For those who are candidates for **immunotherapy**, it's a good choice. But if you're not a good candidate for allergy shots, traditional treatments include OTC antihistamines, decongestants, eye drops and nose sprays. Remember that **both OTC eye drops and nose spray can have a "rebound" effect** after a few days of use. They are only for temporary, occasional relief. Many healthcare providers believe to be effective, it's important to begin taking antihistamines or decongestants 10-14 days before the start of ragweed season – which is now in Texas.

\* But there are additional **non-medication steps you can take** to avoid exposure to the pollen that causes these horrid symptoms. Get in the habit of checking pollen counts each morning, either on a TV weather station or a site like <http://www.aaaai.org/nab/index.cfm?p=pollen> If the pollen counts are high that day, plan to limit outside activities and remain in an air conditioned environment.

\* Keep your **windows closed** and use your AC. Screens won't keep those billions of miniscule pollen grains out of your house or car. It may save energy, but it won't help your allergy symptoms if you hang laundry outdoors where the wet items easily trap pollen grains. **Use your clothes dryer** instead.

\* If you need to mow or do other garden chores wear a protective mask. Avoid touching your face or eyes too. Leave your clothes and shoes in the garage or laundry room when finished with outdoor chores and head straight to the shower. Don't forget to wash your hair, where pollen can cling, and rinse your nostrils, too. If you need to be outdoors when pollen counts are high, such as at a sporting or recreational events, rub a light coating of petroleum jelly (Vaseline) under your nose. It will help trap pollen and prevent pollen from being inhaled.

\* Dogs and cats act like magnets to pollen grains. Either keep your pets inside as much as possible during the ragweed season or brush or shampoo them frequently to get rid of the pollen trapped on their coats before you let them indoors.. Incidentally, dogs and cats can have allergy, too. Ask your vet what treatments are best for your pet if you notice your pet sneezing, congested, with a runny nose or if they're lethargic. For more information about asthma and allergies, contact [info@aafatexas.org](mailto:info@aafatexas.org) or check our website [www.aafatexas.org](http://www.aafatexas.org)

**Upcoming AAFA-TX programs:** **1) Aug. 17**, "Asthma Management & Education" a CE program for nurses and respiratory therapists, Ft. Worth, instructor: Jeanette Arnold, MSN, CFNP. Pre-registration required. Ft. Worth ISD nurses are automatically registered. **2) Aug. 24**, "Asthma Management & Education" a CE program for nurses, respiratory therapists and educators, Cleveland, Ohio. Instructor: Maureen George, PhD, RN, AE-C. Pre-registration required. Cleveland P. S. nurses automatically pre-registered. **3) Aug. 25** "Tools to Manage Asthma & Allergies" worksite wellness program, Gulfstream Aerospace, Dallas, Eric Schmitt, MD, instructor **4) Sept. 3**, "Asthma Management & Education" a CE program for nurses and respiratory therapists, Seattle, WA. Instructor: Carol Lilley, RN, BSN. Pre-registration required. Seattle Public School nurses are automatically pre-registered. For more info or to register, contact [info@aafatexas.org](mailto:info@aafatexas.org) or see [www.aafatexas.org/events](http://www.aafatexas.org/events)

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