

# Hay fever sufferers suffer more in Eugene

By Lori Steinhauer  
Of the Emerald

As spring buds bloom to flowers, Eugene becomes an Earthly purgatory more spiteful for hay fever sufferers than nearly anywhere else in the nation.

Eugene has one of the highest concentrations of grass pollen in the country because of its valley location and the many nearby grassfields, says Dr. Richard Buck, allergy and asthma physician at the Student Health Center.

And because allergies are most prompted during the early teen to young adult years, the University population is a target for allergies, Buck says.

While genetic susceptibility runs about 10 to 20 percent, Buck says allergic reactions develop most commonly among college-aged students, 15 to 20 percent of whom suffer from allergy symptoms.

University students who have family

histories of allergy trouble may have never suffered from allergies themselves until moving to Eugene, where they may likely develop reactions to the high levels of grass pollens, Buck says.

In Eugene, grass pollens are the most widespread allergy culprits, though other pollens such as animal hair, dust and other debris cause allergies, too. Airborne pollens are drawn from the grassfields north of Eugene and then trapped into the southern Willamette Valley, where they linger from mid-spring to mid-summer, Buck says.

But pollen allergies come and go depending on "how much sunshine comes between the raindrops," Buck says. "If we get a long dry period, pollen will come out."

Common symptoms of allergy sufferers are coughing, wheezing, runny noses and itchy eyes. Though some relief is available for allergy victims, the

approach that Buck recommends is allergy-prevention. Allergy symptoms can be reduced by wearing face masks and glasses, and keeping windows closed during the airborne pollen season, he says.

If prevention doesn't help the allergies, medical attention has its possibilities. Over-the-counter antihistamines such as Chlor Trimeton and prescription nose sprays are two symptom reducers. However, Buck does not recommend that people use over-the-counter nose sprays to cure their allergies.

"For people who have a lot of symptoms we have used allergy injections to make people less sensitive to the pollens," Buck says. However, the injection method is a long-term process which must begin before the season hits. Shots of the allergenic substance are given in increasing doses, beginning with trace amounts.



Eugene is one of the worst places in the nation for hay fever sufferers.

## Experts don't agree over effectiveness of bee pollen

While health food supporters claim it's a sweet way to get rid of your allergy, doctors say you're merely being stung for the price.

Bee pollen, say a number of natural foods authorities, provides natural goodness in nutrition and allergy prevention.

But according to local certified allergists, bee pollen may be a waste of money and ingestion can be harmful.

In extreme cases, people have died from allergic reactions after eating pollen, says Dr. Richard Buck, allergy and asthma physician at the Student Health Center.

The majority of reactions, however, resemble mild to severe hay fever symptoms.

Bee pollen retails for about \$8 to \$10 per pound and for around \$3 to \$6 for a 100-count jar of 500 milligram tablets. It is "good food," according to Bill

Boslaugh, sales manager of Greybee Honey and Beekeeping Supply store

"It's high in vitamins, high in minerals and high in trace minerals," Boslaugh says.

Local pollens can be eaten to cure local allergies, he says. But like anything, too much can be dangerous.

"For curing allergies, anyone who takes pollen should do it under the guidance of a physi-

cian," Boslaugh warns.

Honey Heaven owner Eugene Scott agrees that bee pollen is high in nutritional content and says it also provides digestive-aiding enzymes.

"I've seen it help a lot of people dramatically," says Scott. "I've seen people who within hours have had an improvement on their ability to breathe." But pollen should be tested first in trace amounts to

prevent any excessive allergic reactions, he adds.

But local clinical ecologist Dr. John Gambee has a different approach to allergies. Gambee recommends prevention through a balanced diet, regular exercise, plenty of rest and avoidance of caffeine and other drugs.

"If your health is better, then your allergies are going to be less of a problem," Gambee says.

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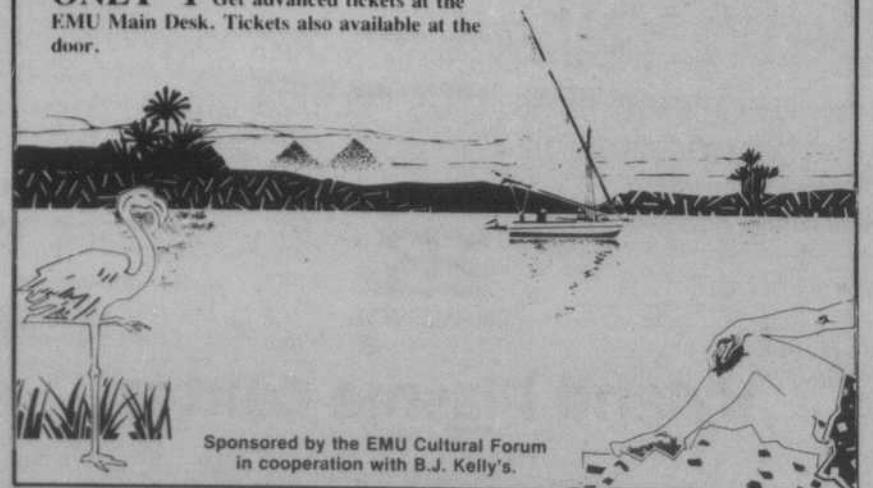


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