

Pollen: Ways to limit allergies

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She said the clinic saw a decrease in the number of patients coming in feeling miserable, which is the staff's informal way of noting how bad the season is going.

That doesn't mean breathing has been easy all the time.

Last weekend the grass pollen counts were in the "very high" category, as measured by the station at Oregon Allergy Associates in Eugene that provides data to the National Allergy Bureau's database.

On Friday, the count was 358. On that scale, 200 is considered "very high." This year, the highest count was 757, recorded on June 5-6.

Monday, the count had fallen to 79, still classified as "high." The tree pollen count was 23, in the moderate range.

Pollen.com's levels for the Salem area increased dramatically starting on June 17 and have stayed in the "high" to "medium-high" range through. According to the site, most allergy sufferers begin to have symptoms when levels reach "medium."

Even if pollen counts are down, windy days and harvest season create problems for allergy sufferers, when

Typical allergy timeline

Trees:

- Cedar and pine can pollinate as early as December.
- Hazelnut, juniper, cypress and spruce begin in January.
- Alder, birch and elm start in February.
- The last group, pollinating in March and April, including oak, sweet gum, sycamore, cottonwood, maple, ash, hickory-pecan, beech locust and walnut.

Grass:

- Usually the grass season is at its peak from Memorial Day to Fourth of July, but depending on the climate, it can shift a little earlier or a little later. The Willamette Valley has very high grass pollen due to nearly 500,000 acres of land used for commercial production of grass seed.

Weeds:

- Typically, weeds pollinate toward the end of summer and into fall until first frost.

Perennial allergens:

- People who have allergies to feathers, animal dander, dust mites or mold may have symptoms year-round. Those symptoms may be worse during colder weather with increased indoor exposure.

— Source: Oregon Allergy Associates.

tree pollen gets whipped around and work in fields kicks up extra pollen, Brenner said.

Beyond taking medication, those with allergies can alleviate some of their symptoms by following practical advice.

Brenner said to pay attention to pollen counts and allergy forecasts, such as those provided by Pollen.com.

Daily pollen counts are available at www.oregonallergyassociates.com/pollen-counts.html.

Extra precautions are

needed during harvest season.

"We usually suggest people keep their windows closed, especially if they live next to a hay field," she said.

She said people should take a shower before going to bed at night so they are not spreading the source of their suffering to their pillow — and keep their windows closed.

"It might be cooler (to have the window open), but you might not be able to sleep because you are sneezing all night," she said.

Merritt: Encouraged with how Polk County's system works

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She applied and interviewed for the job. She got a second interview and eventually a job offer.

"It just seemed so seamless," she said. "It was something that was a huge step out of the box for me because I was born and raised in Jackson County."

Merritt said she's still unsure how she will feel about the rain in the Willamette Valley, but is impressed with what she's seen of the department that will be hers starting next week.

"Here, everybody just works together. It's not about our own agency, it's about the client, which is how it should be," she said.

Merritt worked for Jackson County, first in the juvenile program before moving to a program supervising adults.

From there, she took a job with the county's parole and probation pro-

gram. In her last post, she was a manager working on grant writing and with the agency's community partners.

Merritt started in Polk County at the beginning of June and is still learning how the system works.

She's encouraged by programs like the county's new mental health court, which she believes is a good response to a growing issue in law enforcement.

"I don't know what it is, maybe we've ignored it previously, but it just seems more prominent," she said. "We are kind behind the curve, but with the mental health court and the programs that are in place here and the way things are designed, I think that they are staying on top of the curve."

Merritt believes the job is about holding people accountable, but also following that up with helping clients make better

choices in the future or helping them navigate the challenges life throws at them.

She believes probation officers sometimes act as law enforcement officers and other times as social workers.

"Sometimes you have someone sitting across from you who's made a mistake, or they've used. They don't always need to go to jail," she said. "I think our job is important to not only protect the community and try and support the criminal justice system, but to support them."

She said she will take some time to figure out how best to do that here.

"Really, I think that my plans are to work with the staff here and the administration to see what their vision is for the department," she said. "I'm used to the Jackson County way; I need to learn the Polk County way."

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