Off-the-charts pollen spreads allergy misery

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Allergy season has come early and hit with a wheezing vengeance in parts of the South and Midwest this year, thanks largely to an unusually warm winter. Abundant pollen is causing watery eyes, sniffles and sneezing.

Doctors say the spring misery stretches from Mississippi to Ohio and from Georgia to Texas, where a drought has exacerbated the problem. Forecasters and allergists blame the unseasonably warm weather, and few cold snaps, for causing plants to bloom weeks earlier than normal and release the allergy-causing particles.

In some areas, allergists say pollen counts this week are as high as they've ever recorded. A clinic at Vanderbilt University in Nashville recorded 11,000 grains of pollen per cubic meter Tuesday, the worst in the 12 years they've tracked the number. The Atlanta Allergy & Asthma Clinic says this week's pollen counts have beaten a high mark recorded there in April 1999. Their count for Tuesday was almost 9,400. Fifteen-hundred is considered very high.



Pollen overload

A thick coating of pollen covers the waters that surround South Cove Park on Wednesday, leaving many suffering with allergies. See related story, **A2.**

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