

Sneezin' season



Bright spring colors bring pale yellow pain of pollen

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
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SENECA — Over the past week, local residents may have noticed a coating of yellow residue on their car.

If not, constant sneezing, itchy eyes and a sore throat are other signs that pollen season is in full force.

"We've had high pollen counts for the last couple of weeks, and you'll continue to see that for the next few weeks," said Dr. Aaron Zeller

of Prisma Health—Oconee Memorial Hospital's Center for Family Medicine. "If



Zeller

you've lived here long enough, you know this happens every spring. This is definitely the time of the year when trees are doing it mostly and we can see it. This is probably one of the biggest allergy times of the year."

While people are affected differently by nagging allergies, Dr. Justin Way of AnMed Health said three steps can be taken to lessen the effects of higher pollen counts.



Way

"I see three ways to deal with allergies, and the first is avoidance," Way said. "No. 2 is taking

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For many people, the beautiful sights and smells of spring are only a sign that allergy season has arrived.

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medications, and No. 3 is allergy shots or drops that are immunotherapy. People who have mild to moderate symptoms can try to avoid things such as allergies that aren't seasonal, like cats or dogs. But it's hard to avoid pollen, because it's everywhere."

If you can't avoid getting out to exercise or doing yard work, Zeller recommends a specific time window for those activities.

"The dawn and dusk times are the worst, usually, and where pollen counts are the highest," he said. "The rest of the day is probably a little safer if you want to get out and be active. Avoid the twilight and dusk hours, and if you're outside, just wash your face as quick as you can to get it off your skin and eyes so it's not irritating you."

Wearing a mask while doing yard work can also help prevent irritation, according to Zeller.

Way, who specializes in otolaryngology, said he's been recommending over-the-counter medication to help minimize allergy symptoms.

"One of the major things I'm recommending for patients is to do a saline or sinus wash to decrease the allergen load that's inside the nose, doing it daily during allergy seasons," he said. "I also recommend a combination of an antihistamine such as Allegra or Zyrtec and a nasal spray."

Zeller also recommended a combination of an antihistamine and a nasal spray for those suffering from allergies, but said those taking medications should be cautious about those that can make people drowsy. Rainfall also helps reduce pollen.

There are other treatment options that can be done in a physician's office.

"We have two newer things we're doing, and allergy shots have been around forever," Way said. "We do allergy drops for a lot of patients that don't want to come in and have a shot weekly to where they can put a drop under their tongue, and that's one of the more convenient ways. Once patients progress to developing sinus infections second to allergies, we have a new minimally invasive approach, which is balloon sinuplasty. It's really helping people."

Both doctors said they're aware of rumored home remedies ranging from honey to moonshine.

"Honey coats your throat and makes it feel a little better, but it's made from pollens," Way said. "It's basically a crude form of immunotherapy or allergy shots. The theory is that things in your environment are

used to make the honey, so by using the honey, you're sort of providing your own allergy drops or shots, but it only covers a few things."

"I've heard people say things about moonshine," Zeller said with a laugh. "They say it'll help with congestion, or even whiskey to clear them up. Those types of things are home remedies for just about anything. Honey is really healthy for you, and there is evidence to support using honey for a cough with children."

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