

Allergy season no laughing matter

31 March 2011

For allergy sufferers, April Fools' Day means something better than a good laugh. It's the start of the daily Gottlieb Allergy Count.

At 5:00 a.m. Friday, Dr. Joseph Leija, an allergist at Gottlieb Memorial Hospital, will climb to the rooftop of the Gottlieb Professional Building in Melrose Park where he maintains a special pollen-catching machine. As he has for the last decade, Dr. Leija will carry samples down to his office, place them under the microscope and determine that day's official allergy count for the Midwest. He will do this every business day through October, the end of the pollen-reporting season.

The official count is then posted on Twitter under GottliebAllergy, in English, and AlergiaGottlieb, in Spanish. The count is also available through the Gottlieb Allergy Hotline (1-866-4-POLLEN [English] and 1-866-ALERGIA [Spanish]) and at the Gottlieb Web site, www.GottliebHospital.org.

"It has been a very wet winter so there will be many respiratory irritants resulting in coughing and inflamed nasal passages caused by mold spores," said Dr. Leija, whom is certified by the National Allergy Bureau to take and broadcast the official Midwest count.

"Chicago air quality is very poor due to pollution, weather conditions and plant life, and statistically we have more people than the average who suffer from symptoms such as scratchy, runny noses and watery eyes," Dr. Leija said.

The count for tree, grass, weed, mold, pollen and ragweed allows allergy sufferers to better control their symptoms. They can decide if they must take medication that day or just roll up the windows while driving. Chicagoland media broadcast and publish the count prepared by Dr. Leija, a regional expert in allergies.

Dr. Leija and the National [Allergy](#) Bureau recommend the following preventive measures for those with allergies:

Minimize outdoor activity when pollen counts are high. Peak pollen times are usually between 7 and 10 a.m.

Shut windows in your house on days when pollen counts are high. Use your air conditioner for temperature control instead.

When gardening or mowing the lawn, wear a filter mask.

Wash your hair at night before sleeping to remove excessive [pollen](#) and potential allergens that could cause irritation.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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