

Achoo! Pollen at its worst in years in many areas

April 9 2010, By TAMARA LUSH , Associated Press Writer



Asa High washes pollen off of the seating area behind the driving range at the Augusta National Golf Club, the site of the Masters golf tournament, Sunday, April 4, 2010, in Augusta, Ga. The tournament begins Thursday, April, 8, 2010. (AP Photo/Charlie Riedel)

(AP) -- Pollen: It's on your car, in the air and especially in your sinuses.

From Florida to Texas to Colorado, 2010 is shaping up to be a monster of an [allergy](#) season. The words "[pollen](#)" and "allergy" are among the top 10 trending topics on [Twitter](#) in several U.S. cities. Everywhere, it seems, is covered in a fine [yellow dust](#) that irritates our lives. Experts say it's the worst they've seen in years.

"It's wicked bad this year," said Dr. Mona Mangat, an allergy specialist in St. Petersburg, Fla., who can't recall a worse year in the six she's worked there. "We're just overwhelmed with patients right now. We're

double- and triple-booked with new patients, trying to work people in because we know how much people are suffering."

And they are suffering a lot. Take 5-year-old Sam Wilson of St. Petersburg. His mom gives him Claritin in the morning, Nasonex and Benadryl at night, and he receives four allergy shots every week. The sidewalks of his hometown are covered in what look like piles of dried, brown worms - but they are mounds of oak tree pollen.

The boy's mother said that when the pollen is at its worst, his eyes water and itch, he can't breathe through his nose and his throat burns.

"His reaction yesterday was pretty bad," said his mother, 34-year-old Joanna Wilson on Thursday. "He couldn't breathe, he was completely congested, and crying."

[Oak trees](#) are the culprit in many places in the Southeast.

The trees produce 3,000 to 6,000 pollen particles per cubic meter; it only takes 10 particles to trigger an allergic reaction.

J.P. Levins, executive Web producer for the site pollen.com, said he's received a lot of e-mails from suffering Floridians - but he expects more complaints from other parts of the U.S. soon.

"The season is actually just picking up," he said, adding that most of the country is facing high pollen counts.

This year is especially bad in the Southeast, weather experts say, probably due to winter's unseasonably [cold weather](#).

"That may have helped delay some of the plants from blooming as early as they may have wanted to," said John Feerick, senior meteorologist at

AccuWeather. "It's the fact that everything is coming out all at once."

High winds in some areas also spread the misery.

"We had a perfect storm this year," said Dr. William Storms, professor at University of Colorado and a clinician. "It's the worst I've seen in 10 years."

Tree pollen season should subside within a few weeks, but experts say some will continue to suffer because grass and weed allergies rise in the summer months.

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