

# Extremely high mold count triggers dangerous air quality alert

August 13 2014

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A dangerous air quality alert was called today due to the extremely high count for mold detected in the Gottlieb Allergy Count.

"Today's mold count is the highest for the 2014 recording season," said Joseph Leija, MD, who created the Gottlieb Allergy Count, the official allergy count for the Midwest.

The Gottlieb Allergy Count today is: trees - low, mold - very high (dangerous air alert status), grass - moderate and weeds - moderate. "The [mold count](#) was 53,000 today, well over the 50,000 threshold that triggers a high alert warning," Dr. Leija said.

How will this affect [allergy sufferers](#)?

"Tightening in the chest and extreme difficulty in breathing is what those with mold allergies will endure today," Leija said. "Temperatures today are in the 60s, extremely mild and breezy for August, which encourages people to open windows for fresh air. Bu if you have allergies, keep the windows closed and run the air conditioner to filter out allergens."

Typical pollen seasons are: Trees from March to May, grass from May to June, weeds/ragweed from mid-August to October and mold all season long, depending on dampness.

Leija said the recent warm, humid weather brought on the spike in mold spores. "Take your allergy medication, protect your breathing

environment and get the daily free allergy count so you can monitor and adjust behavior and medication for optimum health," he said.

Every weekday morning at 4:30 a.m. for the past two decades Dr. Leija has climbed the stairs to a rooftop on the Gottlieb Memorial Hospital campus, located just outside of Chicago. There he maintains a scientific pollen-catching machine developed in Britain during World War II to detect poison in the air. The machine records [air](#) particles in two-minute intervals during a 24-hour period.

Dr. Leija, 84, takes the glass slide with the day's catch and meticulously identifies and counts every spore using a microscope. He uses an algorithm created by the National Allergy Bureau to calculate the official allergy count for the Midwest by 7 a.m.

"People with respiratory conditions need to know the allergy count early in the morning so they can take the right medication and make adjustments in their routine to improve their health," said Dr. Leija, who provides the media and the community with the numbers at no charge. "Several broadcast networks and Chicago's largest newspaper report the Gottlieb Allergy Count daily so I am up at 4 a.m. to get the process started."

Dr. Leija is the only allergist in the Midwest certified by the National Allergy Bureau to report the official allergy count of the Midwest. He follows a complex series of algorithms to arrive at the daily [allergy count](#) and his numbers are used by the association in their daily national reports of allergy activity.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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