



## Spring brings allergies

by [Kristen Van Dyke](#)

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Pollen season is here and, according to Dr. Mark Schecker, it's causing runny noses, watery eyes and sneezing attacks for 25 to 35 percent of the population.

He says the pollen season started early this year and it's not the yellow stuff that's driving people crazy, but the pollen you can't see.

"What you don't realize is that the tree pollen that's been out is invisible. It's microscopic and it floats in the air, so you can't see it. And so a lot of people who have been suffering the past few weeks haven't realized that that's what's causing them problems."

Spring allergy season starts with tree pollen in late February. Dr. Schecker says it's the hardwood trees like oaks, elms and cedars that cause the most problems. Tree pollen eases off in mid-April, but then the grass picks up where the trees leave off and start creating pollen through June.

If you have pollen allergies, you know that some days are worse than others. Dr. Scheck says the weather plays a big role. "In general the worst days are sunny, dry windy days where pollen's really blowing all over the place. Better days are overcast or rainy days," Schecker said.

He says that pollen allergies go beyond sneezing and watery eyes and can lead to major health problems. "It can lead to chronic sinus problems. It can lead to chronic ear infections in children it can lead to asthma."

But whether it's the tree pollen or the grass pollen you're allergic to, Schecker says there are things you can do for relief. He suggests keeping the windows closed to keep the pollen out and says that air conditioners can help filter the pollen too. And, if that doesn't work there's also medicine.

"Antihistamines and nasal sprays that contain medication that are more preventative so they act to block the allergies and be more effective and of course we have allergy shots for these people that suffer these allergies year end and year out. You may be able to actually get rid of your allergies through a series of desensitization shots."

Dr. Schecker also says he's had cases of people moving here and having allergies for the first time. The climate is likely the culprit. Because of our warmer climate and longer growing season, we have a longer pollen season. So, snowbirds and others who've relocated from colder climates to the Carolinas may find themselves with new allergy problems.