



Allergist: Active spring allergy season expected

by [Joel Allen](#)

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Ornamental trees are flowering, dandelions are emerging and the grass is turning green.

For most of us, that means spring is right around the corner. But for thousands of Grand Strand and Pee Dee residents, it means suffering from sneezing, watery eyes and nasal congestion and other [allergy symptoms](#).

Carol McGonnell of Horry County was walking on the beach one unusually warm day recently, when she noticed something in the air that caused a reaction.

"Whatever was starting to bloom because of the great weather down there, it just seemed to make it difficult to breathe and walk," McGonnell said.

She knew immediately it was an allergic reaction to pollen in the air, but allergist Dr. Mark Schecker says many patients he sees can't tell the difference right away whether the symptoms they're experiencing are from a common cold or an allergy.

Schecker says allergies will give you itching, colds won't. If you have a fever and thicker mucus secretions, it's more likely you have a cold than an allergy. Finally, he says, the length of your symptoms will tell you which one you have.

"Colds usually will clear up within 5 to 7 days whereas allergy symptoms tend to last longer. And they tend to recur, if it's seasonal allergy at the same time every year," Schecker said.

So if you're getting what you think is a cold every March or April and it lasts for a month, Schecker says that's more likely an allergy than a cold.

Pollen produced by hardwood trees, oaks, elms and nut trees are the real culprit this time of year, Schecker says. You see the beautiful Bradford pear trees flowering this time of year and you know allergy season is right around the corner, but Schecker says those flowering plants you can see aren't the real problem.

"The thing about the pollen that bothers people this time of year is that you can't see it. It's invisible, it's light, it floats in the air, it impacts your mucus membranes in your eyes and your nose."

Schecker expects another active spring allergy season this year, similar to last year's. That's because we had a cool, wet winter that will stimulate a lot of growth.

Fortunately, Schecker says there are many more allergy treatment options today than there were just a few years ago. He says allergy treatment today is more focused, effective and longer lasting.