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## **HIGHLIGHTS**

This Spring's burst of color — a spectacular display of buds and blossoms — comes hand-in-hand with a bumper crop of airborne pollens and mold spores, due in part to winter's heavy rains and higher than normal temperatures. For those with allergies, Zab Mosenifar, M.D., Director of Pulmonary and Critical Care at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, offers tips for circumventing Mother Nature at this time of year.

## **CEDARS-SINAI'S DIRECTOR OF PULMONARY AND CRITICAL CARE OFFERS TIPS FOR SEASONAL ALLERGY SUFFERERS**

LOS ANGELES, CA (April 7, 2004) – If you're among the 35 million-plus people in the U.S. who suffer from seasonal allergies, it's not news to you that the allergy season has arrived early in many parts of the country – especially in Southern California. Your nose knows it's true and so do your eyes, chest, head and maybe even your ears. Sneezing, congestion, runny nose and itchiness are common symptoms of allergic rhinitis (commonly referred to as “hay fever”.)

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“There's no doubt that nature has created a wonderful greenhouse effect this year,” says Zab Mosenifar, MD, Director of Pulmonary and Critical Care at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. “The heavy rains and higher temperatures have produced an impressive growth of vegetation which is wonderful to enjoy if you don't have allergies. But if you have a history of allergic rhinitis or allergic asthma (the most common type of asthma), you need to be careful in terms of when and where you exercise during this season.”

Both allergic rhinitis and allergic asthma can be triggered by allergens such as pollen and mold. “While allergic rhinitis is an annoying condition, allergic asthma is more serious and can be life-threatening,” explains Dr. Mosenifar.

In allergic asthma, allergens cause the passages in the airways to become inflamed and swollen, making it difficult to breathe. In allergic rhinitis, the mucous membranes in the nose become inflamed, causing sneezing, congestion, runny nose and itchiness in the roof of the mouth, throat, eyes, nose and ears.

It's almost impossible to hide from pollen and mold since both are carried by wind currents. While pollens are only found outdoors, molds are found both indoors and outdoors. Outdoor molds can be found in soil, vegetation and rotting wood; you'll find indoor molds in bathrooms, attics, carpets, upholstery and garbage containers — and in any moist area.

With pollen and mold just about everywhere, is there anything allergy sufferers can do to minimize their discomfort during this season? The following are tips Dr. Mosenifar shares with his patients for “circumventing or getting around” their environment.

1. Change the time and location of your exercise routine. Avoid exercising in the early morning between the hours of 5 and 10 since that's when pollen is usually emitted. Exercise indoors whenever possible or find a place that's somewhat removed from green vegetation.
2. Consider swimming. Dr. Mosenifar especially recommends that people suffering from seasonal allergies and asthma integrate swimming into their exercise routine. “Swimming is an excellent exercise for people with allergies. If you're fortunate to be near a beach, you'll find one of the purest concentrations of air in the ten to 15 inch layer right above the water. The gentle humidity keeps your airways from drying out.”
3. Ask your physician if he or she recommends long-acting over-the-counter antihistamine medications. “These often can be effective in blocking the effects of exposure to allergens,” Dr. Mosenifar says. He's hesitant to recommend immunotherapy as a panacea for allergies. “Identifying exactly which substances a person is allergic to is like answering the ‘\$64,000 dollar question.’ It would be wonderful if we could do that, but it's very difficult since there are literally thousands of allergens. Immunotherapy has been around for years, but it's still more of an unconventional therapy.”
4. Take a look at some of the allergen-specific products on the market. Mattress and pillow covers that keep harmful dust mite allergens from escaping from bedding can be helpful. And wearing a face mask, although it might not be very attractive, is definitely better than not being able to enjoy the outdoors,” Dr. Mosenifar adds.

Finally, if you're thinking about moving to get away from your allergies, think again. Dr. Mosenifar advises against it. “I am very much against people moving in hopes of finding an allergy-free environment,” he says. “Once you move, your allergies are not going to go away. If you have a propensity for developing allergies, you might buy some time in a new location but you'll eventually find new allergens.”

Cedars-Sinai is one of the largest nonprofit academic medical centers in the Western United States. For the fifth straight two-year period, it has been named Southern California's gold standard in health care in an independent survey. Cedars-Sinai is internationally renowned for its diagnostic and treatment capabilities and its broad spectrum of programs and services, as well as breakthroughs in biomedical research and superlative medical education. It ranks among the top 10 non-university hospitals in the nation for its research activities.

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