

Hay fever season peaking

September 3 2007

Last month's downpour in the Midwest has triggered an increase in mold spores but dampened the U.S. pollen count -- at least temporarily.

The hay fever season, which begins around Aug. 15 and ends with the first frost, is expected to peak this week, easing the suffering of millions afflicted with seasonal allergic rhinitis, better known as hay fever, the Chicago Sun-Times reported Monday.

In Chicago, recent rains increased the number of mold spores per cubic meter to a "very high" threshold Friday of 50,000, down from an Aug. 22 high for the season of 62,766 spores, the Sun-Times reported.

The rain kept pollen from floating in the air but helped boost the growth of weeds, which would spread pollen grains if hot, dry, windy air returns, said Dr. Joseph Leija, an allergist in Melrose Park, Ill.

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology advises hay fever sufferers to keep windows closed and use air conditioning, minimize outdoor activity, shower after being outdoors and avoid places where ragweed thrives, such as roadsides, empty lots and edges of woods.

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