

State of residency can increase children's risk of hay fever

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If you think your child's stuffy nose is due to an autumn cold, you might want to consider allergies, especially if you live in the southern region of the United States. A study being presented this week at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) found hay fever is more prevalent in children living in the southeastern and southern states.

"The study found more than 18 percent of [children](#) and adolescents have [hay fever](#) in the United States, with the highest frequency in the southeastern and southern regions of the country," said allergist Michael Foggs, MD, ACAAI president-elect. "While the reason is unknown, it is most likely due to climate factors."

Environmental influences, such as temperature, precipitation and UV index in the southern regions seem to be responsible for the increase in [allergy sufferers](#).

Researchers studied 91,642 children aged 17-years-old and younger that took part in a 2007 National Survey of Children's Health. The states with the lowest population of children suffering from hay fever were found to be Alaska, Montana and Vermont.

"According to the study, wetter regions with average humidity were associated with a decreased number of children with hay fever," said Dr. Foggs. "The study also found areas of the south with warm temperatures and elevated UV indexes seem to harbor more hay fever sufferers."

Hay Fever, also known as allergic rhinitis, most commonly occurs in the spring and fall months, but can last year round for some of the 50 million Americans with allergies.

ACAAI warns allergens are difficult to avoid, and parents shouldn't consider moving to help their

children find allergy relief.

"An allergy sufferer may escape one allergy to ragweed for example, only to develop sensitivity to other allergens, such as grasses, in a new location," said allergist Stanley Fineman, MD, ACAAI past president. "Allergens, such as pollen, can be found in virtually all regions, including Hawaii, Alaska and Maine, making avoidance nearly impossible. This study shows that climate truly influences allergens which can ultimately trigger symptoms in those affected."

According to ACAAI allergists, the most common hay fever symptoms include:

- Runny nose
- Itching
- Sneezing
- Stuffy nose due to blockage or congestion

Parents who believe their child may be suffering from hay fever should schedule an appointment with a board-certified allergist for proper testing, diagnosis and treatment. Allergy treatment may go beyond over-the-counter medications and include immunotherapy (allergy shots), which can alter [allergy](#) progression, curing patients of symptoms while preventing the development of other allergies.

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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