

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Allergy Season 2019 Expert Predictions: Early start for the Prairie provinces, late start for BC, and 'normal' start for the rest of Canada

New survey shows 65% of Canadians mistake seasonal allergy symptoms for a cold and 40% of Canadians aren't taking allergy medications early enough

March 25, 2019 – Richmond, BC – Experts at Aerobiology Research Laboratories who specialize in pollen and spore identification and research in Canada, predict Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba will see a much earlier start to the tree pollen season resulting in an early arrival of spring allergy symptoms for many. The aeroallergen monitoring firm collects pollen samples daily at collection sites across Canada and looks at the top pollens present in each city, assessing the average pollen season length. Last year, the average allergy season length across Canada was 115 days, with Victoria, Vancouver, Burnaby, Hamilton, and Brampton experiencing the longest seasons.

Although late, peak allergy season has already started in BC this year. Monitoring stations in Victoria and Vancouver are recording very high levels of cedar pollen.

For allergy sufferers, the start of allergy season underlines the importance of taking allergy medications proactively.

“Many allergy sufferers make the mistake of waiting until they are experiencing symptoms before taking allergy medication,” says London Drugs Pharmacist Lily Liang. “Some medications can take a few weeks to become fully effective, so ideally, allergy sufferers should start taking their medication two weeks prior to the start of allergy season.”

A new survey conducted by Insights West on behalf of London Drugs found that four in ten (40%) Canadians don't take start taking their allergy medications early enough. This includes three in ten (29%) who say they only take allergy medication when they start to feel symptoms, and one in ten (11%) who take them only when they notice symptoms are not going away. Just seven per cent take them either right at the start of allergy season or two weeks beforehand.

Liang says that many people mistake early season allergy symptoms with a cold.

“The similarities between cold symptoms and allergy symptoms can make it difficult to tell which condition to treat,” she says.

The survey underscores Canadians' confusion as 65 per cent mistake allergy symptoms for a cold. Most respondents identified the symptoms of a cold as coughing (88%), sneezing (83%), sore throat (83%), runny/stuffy nose (79%), and chest congestion (70%). When thinking of allergies, most respondents associate them with itchy or watery eyes (93%), sneezing (90%), and a runny/stuffy nose (78%). Fewer than half recognize the other symptoms shown as a sign of allergies, such as itchy ears and throat, wheezing and long-lasting symptoms.

“Although allergies and the common cold share many symptoms, patients experiencing seasonal allergies generally suffer from itchy watery eyes and a runny nose. Symptoms of a cold may include aches and pains, a sore throat, and perhaps a fever and chills, which are not typical of

seasonal allergies. A cold will generally only last about a week or two, whereas seasonal allergies will have much longer-lasting symptoms,” says Liang.

Pharmacists can help distinguish a patient’s symptoms and recommend the right course of treatment based on the severity of symptoms, past response to medications, and any other medical conditions. For allergies, treatments may include antihistamines, decongestants, sinus rinses, nasal sprays or eye drops.

Aerobiology Research Laboratories predicts that provinces east of Manitoba will likely experience an allergy season similar to what they have seen in years past.

“Average spring-like temperatures are predicted for all provinces east of Manitoba so we expect pollen seasons will likely start in the normal window in those areas. Higher than average spring temperatures in the Prairie provinces will result in an early pollen season in those areas. In BC, pollen season has begun already although it was a very late start to the season this year,” explains Dawn Jurgens, director of operations at Aerobiology Research Laboratories.

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ABOUT AEROBIOLOGY RESEARCH LABORATORIES

Aerobiology Research Laboratories monitors and analyzes outdoor allergen levels to produce pollen and spore reports and forecasts. With over 25 years of data, they currently operate over 30 monitoring stations across Canada and more around the world that gather pollen and spore samples daily using innovative aeroallergen rotation impaction samplers. Monitoring stations are strategically placed throughout Canada in highly populated areas and regions with differing biological diversity. Samples are analyzed by highly trained specialized laboratory technologists and utilized in research, publications and developing extremely accurate forecasts.

ABOUT LONDON DRUGS

Founded in 1945, B.C.-based London Drugs has 81 stores in more than 35 major markets throughout British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba including its online store www.LondonDrugs.com. London Drugs offers consumers a range of products from digital cameras and cosmetics to computers and televisions. Renowned for its creative approach to retailing, the company employs more than 7,500 people with pharmacy and health care services being the heart of its business. Committed to innovation and superior customer service, London Drugs has established itself as a reputable and caring company and continues to position itself for future growth and development. Please follow us! [@LondonDrugs](https://twitter.com/LondonDrugs)

Pharmacists are available for interviews regarding seasonal allergies and to provide advice about managing seasonal allergy symptoms. To arrange an interview, please contact:

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HOW DO ALLERGIES DIFFER FROM A COLD?



A survey conducted by InsightsWest on behalf of London Drugs reveals that 65 per cent of Canadians mistake allergy symptoms for a cold.