

# Hay Fever Season Is Here

See Front Cover

➤ HAY FEVER will torment nearly seven and a half million or one out of 20 men, women and children in the United States between now and the first frost.

Allergic rhinitis is commonly known as hay fever or rose fever, although the allergy has nothing whatsoever to do with roses or hay, and there is not even a fever.

Hay fever can be perennial, or it can start in springtime with the first budding of the trees. Generally, it strikes hardest and most widely beginning in August, when ragweed and other pollen are discharged into the air. It usually vanishes when the first weed-killing frost arrives in late Fall.

August is the month of hay fever holidays for those who can get away to such places as Presque Isle, Maine;



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**MISTREATED VICTIMS**—Leeches were once used for bleeding hay fever sufferers, often until they were nearly dead from weakness. During the 18th century, ice-cold water baths were recommended as sure curbs for hay fever.

Monterey, Calif.; Laconia, N.H.; and Grand Teton National Park, Wyo., where there is little or none of the offending pollen.

The hay fever sufferer, tortured by wheezes, sniffles, tears and itching, has in the course of time been the victim of much mistreatment and misinformation. He has variously been forced to inhale vile-smelling smoke until he nearly coughed to death; been bled by leeches till he was hardly strong enough to breathe; been jabbed in the arms and elsewhere by blunt instruments; induced to sleep by pills; coaxed into weird diets; promised breathing ease by all kinds of masks and gadgets. And not only has he been tortured physically and mentally, but he has been drained financially with promises of absolute cure by special gimmicks and treatments.

Allergists advise injections to counteract the effects of ragweed pollen, which is the most common cause of hay fever. To do the most good, shots should be started in March each year.

The microphotograph on the front cover shows ragweed pollen exploding with a force that allows it to be picked up by the wind and spread widely.

A simple ragweed plant can produce up to one billion pollen grains; hay fever victims can be affected by counts of only 45 grains per square inch.

Eradication of even one weed is impossible, says the Allergy Foundation of America, because the seeds remain in the earth for long periods of time and begin to grow again when the earth

is dug up for building homes and highways.

Research is still trying to determine how a tiny grain of pollen, which a plant normally uses to reproduce its kind, can land on the inside surface of the nose and cause so much trouble. The pollen grain is small—1/2500 of an inch wide—yet it appears capable of marshalling the entire blood system against it by producing antibodies.

The antibodies surround the pollen grain and form a material, which in turn causes the lining of the nose to release a chemical called histamine. It is the histamine that causes the swelling and dripping; therefore, antihistamines are used commonly to relieve symptoms of hay fever.

Here are some things to avoid in addition to ragweed:

1. Chlorinated swimming pools.
2. Fumes, such as fresh paint, perfume, smoke, chemicals.
3. Musty, dusty atmosphere.
4. Strong drafts—including country motoring.
5. Over-eating and heavy foods.
6. Strenuous physical exertion, over-fatigue and late hours.

(Cover photograph by National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.)

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