Hay Fever Starts with 'Extremely High' Levels of Pollen

あなたは花粉症ですか？今年は例年と比べて非常に多いスギ花粉が飛散する予想だそう。どのような条件の日に花粉が飛びやすいのか、どうしたら少しでも花粉が体内に入るのを防げるのかを学んで、しっかりと対策する必要がありそうです。あなたは何か特別な対策をとっていますか？

1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

The dreaded hay fever season has arrived. As March begins, cedar pollen is spreading rapidly across the Kansai region. Levels are expected to be significantly higher than usual. Hay fever causes symptoms like sneezing, a runny nose, and itchy eyes.

According to the Japan Weather Association, cedar pollen was already detected in several Kansai locations as of February 28. These include Tanabe City in Wakayama Prefecture, Izumisano City in Osaka Prefecture, and Kakogawa City in Hyogo Prefecture.

Pollen levels began rising between February 28 and March 2. A peak is expected between early and mid-March, following the passing of a cold wave.

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JAPAN Forward

1. Article

The amount of pollen this season is forecasted to be extremely high compared to average years. The association attributes this to the intense heat and prolonged sunshine during the summer of 2024. These conditions created ideal circumstances for bud formation.

Hay fever is an allergic reaction triggered when pollen enters the body. When **inhaled**, the **immune system** produces **antibodies** to fight off these foreign substances. With continued exposure, the buildup of antibodies leads to symptoms such as sneezing, **nasal congestion**, and eye irritation.

The Japan Weather Association notes that pollen **disperses** more easily on sunny, warm days. This is especially true when the air is dry and windy, or following rainfall or two to three days of high temperatures. To minimize exposure, they recommend wearing masks and glasses to protect the eyes and nose. It's also best to wear smooth-textured clothing, as pollen is less likely to stick to it.

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2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. inhale （肺まで空気などを）吸い込む、吸入する

When you **inhale** smoke, it can harm your lungs.

2. immune system 免疫系、免疫システム

Your **immune system** reacts when it detects harmful bacteria.

3. antibody 抗体、抗毒素

Antibodies can remain in your body for a long time after an infection.

4. nasal congestion 鼻詰まり、鼻閉（＝nasal blockage）

Nasal congestion is common during the flu season.

5. disperse 散る、散り散りになる、消散する；（～を）ばらまく、まき散らす、散乱させる

The crowd began to **disperse** after the concert ended.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. **What weather conditions are expected to contribute to the high pollen levels this season?**
2. **How does the immune system respond when pollen is inhaled?**
3. **What recommendations are given to minimize pollen exposure?**
4. **What do you usually do when the pollen levels are high? Do you take any special precautions?**
5. **Do you think the government or local authorities in Japan do enough to help people during the pollen season?**

4. 日本語関連記事：今年の花粉は「非常に多い」昨夏、高温多照で花芽形成に好条件　近畿地方では飛散本格化

3月に入り、近畿地方でスギ花粉の飛散が本格化し始めた。飛散量は例年と比べ非常に多い見込みで、くしゃみや鼻水などのアレルギー症状があらわれる花粉症対策の重要性も増している。

日本気象協会によると、近畿では2月28日時点ですでに和歌山県田辺市や大阪府泉佐野市、兵庫県加古川市などで実際にスギ花粉の飛散が観測された。28日から3月1、2日にかけて飛散量は増していき、寒波が過ぎ去った3月上旬から中旬にかけて飛散のピークを迎える見通しという。

飛散量は、例年と比較して「非常に多い」と予想。同協会はその理由について「昨年夏は猛暑で、さらに日照時間も長かった。この高温多照が花芽の形成に好条件だったと考えられる」と説明する。

花粉症は、花粉が体内に入ることで生じるアレルギー症状だ。花粉が体内に入ると体の中で異物に対する「抗体」が作られるが、花粉を浴び続けると体内の抗体の量が増し、くしゃみや鼻水、目のかゆみなどの症状があらわれるようになる。

同協会によると、花粉が飛びやすいのは、晴れて気温が高い日▽空気が乾燥して風が強い日▽雨の翌日以降や気温の高い日が2～3日続いた後ーなど。マスクやメガネで目や鼻を覆うことで体内に花粉が入るのを防いだり、花粉が付きにくいつるつるした素材の服を選んだりするなどの対策を推奨している。

出典：今年の花粉は「非常に多い」昨夏、高温多照で花芽形成に好条件　近畿地方では飛散本格化
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