

## Monthly Newsletter for Woodlands' CCM Program



# Surviving Tree Pollen Season: Tips for managing allergies.

By Mark M. Ryan MD

Mature oak and pine trees are a beautiful part of the northwestern Florida landscape, and from mid-February through May, they are also the reason you may see a yellow-colored dust on everything outside. While all plants produce pollen, non-flowering trees (oaks, pines, and maples) produce large quantities of a light-weight pollen that spreads much farther and during a much longer period than their flowering counterparts. So even if you do not have an oak or pine tree on your property, you may find your driveway and car bathed in yellow pollen during these months.

During these pollen-filled months, here are a few things you can do to minimize your allergy symptoms:

1. Monitor pollen counts. A number of weather apps use data collected by the National Weather Service to give you a "pollen forecast". As I am writing this article, [www.pollen.com](http://www.pollen.com) tells me that the pollen count is particularly high: 11.5 out of 12. Yes, I am grateful for my antihistamine on a day like today!

2. Change your clothing and bathe after spending time outside. Pollen is designed to stick to anything it touches including you and your clothing. Whether working in the yard or taking a walk around the block, it is a good habit to wash the pollen off when coming back indoors.

3. Wear a mask when doing yard work. Particularly if and when you start a spring yard cleanup project, wearing a mask will significantly limit the amount of pollen you inhale and, thus, decrease any allergy symptoms you develop.

4. It is OK to use multiple allergy medications for multiple allergy symptoms. Glucocorticoid nasal sprays like Flonase and Nasonex decrease runny nose and sneezing. Antihistamines like Allegra, Claritin, or Zyrtec decrease sinus congestion and itching skin. Eye drops help red or itchy eyes. And the decongestant Pseudoephedrine alleviates sinus pressure that can even cause ear pain in severe cases. It is not uncommon for patients to use all four of these types of medications to alleviate symptoms on severe days.

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## &gt;&gt;&gt; IN THE NEWS

## Testosterone treatment; safe, but probably not as effective as advertised.

In the **TRAVERSE** study, testosterone recipients did not have any higher risk of cardiovascular disease or events. Men who received testosterone had modest improvement in scores for libido and mood, but not for erectile function.

Several studies to date have shown that the use of testosterone in older men can improve sexual function, increase bone density, correct unexplained anemia, and reduce depressive symptoms; however, because testosterone deficiency is not a life-threatening condition, uncertainty about the cardiovascular effects of testosterone therapy have limited its use.

In this study, researchers from Cleveland Clinic, Harvard Medical School, Baylor College of Medicine, and Duke University used funding from several pharmaceutical companies that manufacture testosterone treatments to evaluate the treatment's cardiovascular safety.

It included 5,246 men between the ages of 45-80 (average age 63) who had diagnosed cardiovascular disease or multiple risk factors for cardiovascular disease (hypertension, elevated cholesterol, tobacco use, diabetes), symptoms of low testosterone (decreased libido, erectile dysfunction, fatigue, and depressed mood), and two fasting testosterone levels between 100 - 300 ng/dL. Participants were randomized to receive a daily transdermal 1.62% testosterone gel or placebo. The trial excluded men with a history of prostate cancer or an elevated PSA.

Doses of testosterone were adjusted to maintain levels between 350 - 750 ng/dL over the course of the study, which lasted 33 months. During this time period, there was no difference between the placebo or testosterone group in the number of men who experienced a cardiovascular event.

Additional data collected during the study with questionnaires looked at the effect of testosterone on libido, erectile dysfunction, and symptoms of depression. Men receiving testosterone therapy reported almost a 50% increase in sexual desire and sexual activity, but no improvement in erectile dysfunction. Of the men in the study who had significant depressive symptoms at baseline, testosterone therapy was associated with small but significant improvements in mood and energy but did not improve cognition or sleep quality.

This study helps me have a more informed conversation with men who have symptoms of depression, fatigue, and decreased libido. If their testosterone levels are consistently <300 ng/dL, testosterone-replacement therapy can significantly, and safely, improve their symptoms.





MARCH IS

## National Nutrition Month

*As we celebrate National Nutrition Month this March, it's important to focus on nourishing our bodies and minds with healthy choices.*

- **Start Small:** Make sustainable changes like adding veggies to meals or swapping sugary drinks for water.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day to prevent overeating and keep your body functioning well.
- **Balance Plate:** Include carbs, proteins, and fats in each meal for stable energy levels.
- **Mindful Eating:** Pay attention to hunger cues, avoid distractions, and savor each bite for better eating habits.

## National Nutrition Month®



- **Plan Ahead:** Plan meals and snacks to make healthier choices and avoid impulsive decisions.
- **Seek Support:** We offer a series of educational seminars to help you make informed food choices, develop sound eating habits, and find the right type of exercise for your goals. Visit [www.woodlandsweightcenter.com](http://www.woodlandsweightcenter.com) for more information.

Call Us First



### Side effects to a new medication and not sure if stopping it is safe?

Our physicians are on-call 24/7 and available to review your medical history and all of your clinical encounter notes. We can advise you on whether your side effects are likely caused by the new medication and whether you can simply stop the new medication or need a replacement medication.

We want you to receive the best care in the best setting. Call 850-696-4000 and ask the operator for the Woodlands primary care physician on-call prior to going to the emergency room.

