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Prevention key to managing hay fever symptoms

Sydneysiders prone to hay fever and asthma are being urged to take extra care with the start of the peak pollen season.

Up to 25 per cent of Sydney's population experience hay fever symptoms which include sneezing, a runny nose and itchy eyes, resulting in a lack of sleep.

Campbelltown Hospital Immunology and Allergy Director Connie Katelaris said people who know they get hay fever should be thinking about starting their preventative treatment now.

"For those with frequent symptoms, the intranasal sprays available over the counter at the chemist, if used correctly, are very effective," Professor Katelaris said.

"People can be extremely impacted by hay fever or rhinitis; it hits in October/November when HSC and university students are sitting exams.

"We have a pollen count which is based at Campbelltown Hospital. We have started our daily pollen count and the public can download the Sydney Pollen app on their device allowing them to plan their day accordingly."

Hay fever is caused by the nose or eyes coming into contact with environmental allergens such as pollens, dust mites, moulds and animal hair. Many associate hay fever with spring, when airborne grass pollens are at their peak, but Sydney can experience a "second wave" just after Christmas thanks to sub-tropical grasses.

Two pollen traps sit on the roof of Campbelltown Hospital capturing Sydney's pollen count, which has been "low" for the last few weeks.

The trap acts like a vacuum, sucking up the pollen. It sticks to a glass slide inside and it is checked daily during peak hay fever season.

"This season won't be the worst one we've seen because we have had a very dry winter," Professor Katelaris said.

"With little rain, we don't have a prolific flowering of grasses but people could already be reacting to tree pollen."

If you are prone to hay fever symptoms, avoid being outdoors on high pollen days, shower after outdoor activities, use re-circulated air in the car when pollen is high, wear sunglasses, avoid mowing the lawn, dry your bedding and clothing in a tumble dryer and splash your eyes often with cold water to flush out any allergen.