



Press Release

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America Announces 2023 Allergy Capitals

Wichita, Kansas ranked most challenging city in the U.S. for pollen allergies

Washington, D.C., March 15, 2023 — Today, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) released its annual Allergy Capitals™ report for 2023. The report identifies the most challenging cities for pollen allergies in the 100 most populated metropolitan areas in the continental United States. Cities are ranked based on tree, grass, and weed pollen scores, over-the-counter allergy medicine use, and availability of board-certified allergists/immunologists.

This year, Wichita, Kansas, takes the top spot based on its high tree and grass pollen scores, higher-than-average use of allergy medicines, and limited number of allergy/immunology specialists per patient. The top 20 Allergy Capitals for 2023 are:

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| 1. Wichita, KS | 11. Virginia Beach, VA |
| 2. Dallas, TX | 12. Houston, TX |
| 3. Scranton, PA | 13. Little Rock, AR |
| 4. Oklahoma City, OK | 14. Miami, FL |
| 5. Tulsa, OK | 15. Lakeland, FL |
| 6. Sarasota, FL | 16. Raleigh, NC |
| 7. Cape Coral, FL | 17. Palm Bay, FL |
| 8. Orlando, FL | 18. Tampa, FL |
| 9. Des Moines, IA | 19. Greensboro, NC |
| 10. Greenville, SC | 20. Rochester, NY |



See the full 100-city ranking at allergycapitals.com. In addition to the overall national ranking, this year's report also includes rankings by specific pollen types (tree, grass, and weed).

AAFA began identifying annual Allergy Capitals 20 years ago in 2003. Since that first report, pollen counts have worsened. This year's report once again highlights the significant impact that climate change has on public health – specifically, for people with pollen allergies. Rising temperatures result in longer growing seasons, leading to higher pollen concentrations in many areas of the country.

“We are experiencing longer and more intense allergy seasons because of climate change. For people with asthma, allergies can trigger an asthma attack,” says Kenneth Mendez, CEO and president of AAFA. “About 81 million people in the U.S. have seasonal allergic rhinitis, which is most often caused by pollen allergies. If we don't take immediate action on the climate crisis, pollen production will only intensify. This means more allergy and asthma attacks and additional strain on our health systems.”

The [National Climate Assessment](#) from the U.S. Global Change Research Program confirms that climate change is a major threat to public health.



Longer and more intense pollen seasons caused by climate change particularly impact people with allergies and asthma. From 1990–2018, the plant growing season extended an average of 20 days and produces about 21% more pollen, putting people with pollen allergies at risk of more symptoms for longer periods. Allergies can also trigger asthma episodes or attacks. Around 60–80% of the nearly 26 million people in the U.S. with asthma have allergic asthma.

“As pollen counts spike, we often see spikes in emergency room visits for asthma,” continues Mendez. “Around 3,600 people per year die from asthma, so it is important to address and manage asthma and allergy triggers where you live.”

Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous populations bear the disproportionate burden of air pollution, asthma, allergies, and climate change. This is the result of a long history of discriminatory housing and environmental policies in the U.S. that have pushed people of color to live in undesirable neighborhoods with greater environmental and social risks. As a result of systemic racism in U.S. policies, governance, and culture, racial and ethnic minority populations are more vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change.

“AAFA’s Allergy Capitals™ report serves as a national call-to-action on climate change due to its impacts on individual and community health,” says Melanie Carver, chief mission officer of AAFA. “While there are steps individuals can take to manage their symptoms, it is imperative for communities to build their climate resiliency, improve their city planning, and take action on health disparities impacting higher risk populations.”

For people who are impacted by pollen allergies, there are options available to prevent or treat allergy symptoms. Treatment options include over-the-counter or prescription allergy medicines. Medications are most effective when started before a person’s allergy season begins.

“It is important to consult with your allergist about your symptoms so you can devise a treatment plan that best helps you manage them,” says allergist Dr. Neeta Ogden, spokesperson for AAFA. “Allergy testing is also a way to better understand your allergy triggers and therefore, better manage them.”

For tips on how to manage your pollen allergies, go to aafa.org/pollen-allergy.



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About the Research

The Allergy Capitals™ ranking is an annual research and educational project of AAFA, designed to help patients recognize, prevent, and safely treat allergy symptoms. Through this ranking, AAFA raises awareness about the impact of seasonal pollen allergies and provides helpful information designed to improve the quality of life for people who experience them. The ranking is calculated using tree, grass, and weed pollen scores, use of allergy medication, and the number of board-certified allergists/immunologists in each metro area. Visit allergycapitals.com to see the full list and methodology, and to learn more about allergy diagnosis, prevention, and treatment.

About AAFA

Founded in 1953, AAFA is the oldest and largest non-profit patient organization dedicated to saving lives and reducing the burden of disease for people with asthma, allergies and related conditions through research, education, advocacy and support. AAFA offers extensive support for individuals and families affected by asthma and allergic diseases, such as food allergies and atopic dermatitis (eczema). Through its online patient support communities, network of local chapters and affiliated support groups, AAFA empowers patients and their families by providing practical, evidence-based information and community programs and services. AAFA is the only asthma and allergy patient advocacy group that is certified to meet the standards of excellence set by the National Health Council. For more information, visit: aafa.org