

Health Trends

Study Reveals Allergies Are Increasing

(NAPSA)—If it seems like you are sneezing more this year than in the past, you may already have guessed the results of a recent study.

Allergies are on the rise in America, found the study, and most of the increase is due to two allergens found in the environment: ragweed and mold. The findings are important because these two allergens have been linked to a warming climate.

The Quest Diagnostics Health Trends report, “Allergies Across America,” is from Quest Diagnostics, the nation’s leading diagnostic testing company. The study analyzed test results of patients tested for 11 common allergens, including peanuts, house dust and pet dander. It is the largest study ever conducted on allergy testing, based on results of nearly 14 million tests.

In the study, sensitization to common ragweed (the most prevalent form of ragweed) grew 15 percent while mold grew 12 percent nationally. Sensitization indicates the likelihood that a person is allergic to a certain allergen. By comparison, sensitization to the 11 allergens combined increased less than 6 percent.

As many as two in 10 Americans have an allergy to ragweed. Increased exposure to ragweed has been shown to increase an individual’s risk of developing more severe allergy symptoms or asthma. Research by other scientists has shown that a warming climate may increase the abundance of some allergens in the environment. For example, a warmer climate may lengthen the blooming season for ragweed, so people are exposed to it more often.

“Allergies, if untreated, can lead to worsening symptoms and, for



Ragweed and mold allergies are on the rise, possibly due to a warming climate.

some people, asthma,” said Dr. Stanley J. Naides, medical director, Immunology, for Quest Diagnostics. “Allergy symptoms depend on the type of allergy, and can range from a runny nose to wheezing. People who believe they have an allergy should consult their doctor for proper evaluation and treatment.”

The study also found that:

- Children with food allergies may be at risk for the “allergy march,” a pattern of disease that can lead to asthma.

- Children in Medicaid may be tested for allergies at later ages than children in private health plans. Later testing means treatment that could prevent the allergy march doesn’t start as early.

- Peanut allergies are the most common food allergies in school-age kids.

- Men may be at greater risk for allergies than women.

The “Allergies Across America” report also describes allergy symptoms, treatments and tests, including ImmunoCAP, the gold standard of allergy blood tests. Visit www.QuestDiagnostics.com/HealthTrends.