

Media Release

The Hon Martin Foley MP

Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services – COVID-19

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services

Minister for Equality



Thursday, 1 October 2020

STAYING HEALTHY AND COVID SAFE THIS GRASS POLLEN SEASON

This spring it is more important than ever to speak to your doctor to manage your hay fever and asthma and if your symptoms are new or different to usual – you must get tested for coronavirus.

Hay fever or asthma can produce symptoms similar to coronavirus such as a runny nose, cough or shortness of breath, and while good management can help prevent these, it is critical to get tested for coronavirus if these are different to your usual symptoms.

Minister for Health Martin Foley said wearing a mask, maintaining physical distancing and practicing good hand hygiene remains critical during the pollen season. People who are sneezing and coughing from hay fever or asthma may produce more droplets and if they have coronavirus, it could spread quickly.

People with asthma and hay fever symptoms may also touch their face more frequently, increasing their risk of being infected with coronavirus if they are not practicing appropriate hand hygiene.

Grass pollen season officially begins on 1 October, bringing an increase in asthma and hay fever and the chance of thunderstorm asthma. Victoria's thunderstorm asthma risk forecasting system will also be switched on and will run until the end of December.

Thunderstorm asthma is where many people experience asthma over a short period of time and is thought to be triggered by a type of thunderstorm when there are high amounts of grass pollen in the air.

Those considered at risk of thunderstorm asthma include people with asthma or hay fever, including those with undiagnosed asthma. The best protection is to have good control of your asthma or hay fever, and where possible avoid exposure to springtime thunderstorms and the wind gusts that come before them.

People with asthma, and particularly those with mild asthma, should see their GP to develop or review their asthma action plan and make sure any associated hay fever is well managed during the pollen season.

Thunderstorm asthma risk forecasts will be available from 1 October on the VicEmergency app and website at: emergency.vic.gov.au/prepare/#thunderstorm-asthma-forecast

For coronavirus updates or to find out where to get tested visit: dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

"This is not an ordinary spring. It is more important than ever to properly manage your hay fever and asthma this pollen season and check in with your GP to make sure your asthma action plan is up to date."

Quote attributable to Victorian Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton

"If you have symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, or runny nose, and these symptoms are different to your usual hay fever or asthma symptoms - get tested for coronavirus and stay home until you receive your results."

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