

February-March 2020

Trees—Moderate/High, Grasses—Moderate, Weeds—Low, Mold—Low

This has been a bad season for the flu this year with a reported 31 million people having contracted the flu since the beginning of the season. At least 210000 people have been hospitalized since Oct. 2019 and at least 14000 have died from the flu, with 100 children dying of the flu this year. Patients with allergies, asthma, and other chronic diseases are more susceptible to complications of the flu, such as pneumonia. **The CDC states that it is not too late to get a flu vaccine since the flu season may last till May. The flu vaccine is a little more effective this year than in previous years. If you get the flu, flu medications taken within 48 hours of onset of symptoms can help decrease the severity of the flu.** Typical symptoms of the flu are a fever over 100.4, muscle aches, chills, sweats, headache, cough, fatigue, sore throat, and stuffy nose.

Unfortunately, in addition to the flu, a new novel coronavirus, Covid-19 is spreading around the world. There is no vaccine or specific medication for this virus. This virus is related to another coronavirus, SARS. So far, in comparison to SARS, Covid-19 may be more easy to catch, but is far less severe and has a lower fatality rate of 2% compared to SARS, which had a fatality rate of 10%.

Symptoms of Covid-19 range from very mild to severe. Symptoms can range from having a mild cold without fever with chest tightness and cough to severe pneumonia and organ failure. Elderly patients and those with chronic medical conditions are most at risk for severe disease. Children are more likely to have mild symptoms. **Diagnosing Covid-19 requires a blood test, which has become more available through hospitals and academic institutions.**

Preventing the flu and Covid-19 means following rules of hygiene: washing hands frequently, using hand sanitizers if water is not available, covering up when coughing or sneezing, and avoiding crowds. Avoid touching your face until you have washed your hands. If you are sick, you should stay home. If a family member is sick, they should be in a separate bedroom and bathroom. Having an ill person wear a mask will prevent the virus from spreading from them, but wearing a mask if you are not sick does not always prevent getting the disease. Gloves should only be worn when cleaning up bodily secretions.