



## SWEET RELIEF

Spring allergies don't have to get you down

**A**CCORDING TO THE ASTHMA AND ALLERGY FOUNDATION of America, approximately 40 million Americans suffer from seasonal allergies — let alone everyday triggers like dust. Dr. James L. Sublett, president of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, is based in Louisville, Kentucky, a city consistently ranked among the most trying for spring allergies, thanks to sky-high pollen counts. Here is his advice for traveling allergy sufferers.

**AMERICAN WAY:** Spring is tough for allergy sufferers. Why?

**DR. SUBLETT:** Depending on where you are, spring allergy season actually runs from February through June, right when the trees [like oak, elm and birch] start pollinating. It's important to note that two-thirds of people actually get year-round, or perennial, allergies. Those people get additional problems through the spring season, thanks to the extra pollen in the air.

**AW:** Could a traveler check to see if their allergies are likely to spike based on their destination?

**DR. SUBLETT:** They can. For those who have moderate to severe allergies, it's pretty important to try to find out what you're allergic to, to

understand the seasons in general and when you tend to have more problems. Look at the prior history in the areas you're visiting to see if their trees pollinate early. You can check the National Allergy Bureau site ([Aaai.org](http://Aaai.org)) for current pollen levels worldwide.

**AW:** How can one prepare when heading to a high-allergy town?

**DR. SUBLETT:** Here's the key: If you're going to be traveling where the allergy season's already started, have the right medications and start them before you leave, maybe a day or two ahead of time. Even the over-the-counter medications work better if you take them regularly. For example, if you live in northern Michigan, where you still have some snow cover and no trees in bloom, but you're traveling to Tennessee, there may already be pollen out, so plan ahead.

**AW:** Is there any way to curb perennial allergies while you're traveling?

**DR. SUBLETT:** Sure. The avoidance measures are equally important. I recommend bringing a dust-mite-proof pillowcase. Also, a lot of allergens can attach to surfaces, so I recommend a simple wipe for hard surfaces on the airplane and in hotel rooms. You could also carry a high-efficiency dust mask with you, to use during boarding and deplaning, when particles could be stirred up. The relief can be well worth the effort. —JENNIFER BRADLEY FRANKLIN