



The Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology
La Société canadienne d'allergie et d'immunologie clinique

PRESS COMMUNIQUÉ

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**TREE POLLEN SEASON MAY AFFECT
2010 WINTER OLYMPICS**

Ottawa, January 19, 2010 – The Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology is concerned that the upcoming 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver and Whistler will be taking place at the peak of the tree pollen season on the West Coast. While the rest of North America and Europe may be suffering a particularly harsh winter, participants and visitors to the 2010 Winter Olympics may not be thinking that their allergies could affect their performance or enjoyment of these winter games. The Pacific North West is a significant source of red alder tree pollen that typically hits its peak in mid- to late-February and early March. The pollen counts from these trees can reach into the thousands of grains per cubic meter and are a significant cause of allergy and asthma exacerbations in people who are allergic to this tree pollen. Alder pollen has an important cross-reactivity between other types of tree pollen, particularly birch and oak trees which are much more widely distributed across the northern hemisphere and these tree pollens can cause allergy and asthma exacerbations as well.

There is also concern that a number of the symptoms of these pollen allergies can mimic those of respiratory infections or influenza, and this may cause undue concerns among visitors or participants in the Olympics when they develop symptoms. Also the use of over-the-counter allergy and cold medications may lead to disqualification of athletes if they take some of the banned medications such as pseudoephedrine which are common in these medications.

There may be a shortage of allergy and asthma medications to treat symptoms at this time of year in Vancouver. Decisions about stock-piling these medications are usually made in Central Canada where the pollen season is usually delayed by a couple of months compared to the West Coast.

The Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology would like to remind all participants and visitors to the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games to be prepared to treat allergy and asthma symptoms with medications they have arranged to obtain beforehand. Please keep in mind there may be some difficulty getting timely access to medical personnel at a time of year when local allergy sufferers are also having similar problems.

The Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology would like to offer best wishes to all Olympic visitors and participants and hopes that they find this information useful in their preparations for the upcoming games.

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CSACI President

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