

Hay Fever in Japan

Spring is finally coming to Hokkaido! Compared to the rest of Japan, Hokkaido's cherry blossoms, or 桜 *sakura*, bloom much later, usually starting in May (depending on the area). It isn't just the *sakura* showing up, but other plants are also waking up from their winter slumber, making May the beginning of Hokkaido's hay fever season. In this issue of Obihiro Pioneer, we will share a little bit about hay fever and what you can do to make it to the end!



Hay fever is called 花粉症 *kafunshou* in Japanese. It is the allergy to certain types of pollen 花粉 *kafun*.

The most common

type of pollen that Japanese people are allergic to is the Japanese cedar スギ *sugi* and the Japanese alder ハンノキ *hannoki*. While there isn't a confirmed number of how many people are affected by hay fever, it is estimated that 30% of Japanese people are affected by some form of hay fever with 27% of the entire population having an allergy to Japanese cedar pollen! So many Japanese people suffer from hay

fever, that it is commonly called a national illness 国民病 *kokumin byou*.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US, only 7.8% of adults in America are affected by hay fever. Why is hay fever such a problem in Japan? One explanation is that there is just so many Japanese cedars! After WWII, many mountains in Japan were stripped bare to provide resources for the war. In an effort to replenish the land, Japanese cedars and alders were planted. The スギ *sugi* are known to grow quickly and straight, making the perfect resource for lumber.



Eventually it became cheaper to buy lumber from abroad, so the cedars were left alone. Now they have grown to adulthood and give off pollen every year.

So, what about Hokkaido? More specifically, Tokachi...

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Events at TIRC and in Tokachi and Obihiro

When	What	Where/Contact
5/8 (Wed) 19:00-21:00	International Mini-Volleyball Night 国際ミニバレー・ナイト Meet new friends from around the world while enjoying a fun and easy sport. TIRC Multipurpose Hall Organized by the Tokachi International Association	Tokachi International Relations Center 森の交流館・十勝 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp
5/11, 5/25 (Sat) 16:00-18:00	Japanese Conversation and Learning Table 日本語教室 Improve your Japanese language skills in a friendly environment. TIRC Winter Garden Fee: Free of charge Organized by the Tokachi International Association	
5/18 (Sat) 10:00-11:30	53rd Kids Playground (Brazil) 第53回 キッズ・プレイグラウンド(ブラジル) Come with your children to learn and play while meeting local families. This month's theme is Brazil. Karen, our guest from Brazil, will interact with children through songs, dances and arts and craft. TIRC Multi-purpose Hall Fee: Free of charge (no registration required) For children 0-6 years old and their parents/guardians. Organized by the City of Obihiro	
5/18 (Sat) 18:30-20:00	73rd International Talk(California: Nikkei people in the U.S.) 第73回インターナショナル・トーク (カリフォルニア：日系人inアメリカ) Learn more about the countries of the world. This month's sub-theme is "Nikkei people in the U.S.". Our guest from California will introduce his country and share interesting facts about California and his life as a Japanese-American living in the U.S. Participants can interact with the guest through an easy English quiz and free conversation. TIRC Winter Garden Fee: Free of charge (no registration required) For junior high school students and older. Organized by the City of Obihiro	
5/3-5 (Fri-Sun) 10:00-15:00	Children's Week 2019 Waku Waku Festival こどもウィーク2019わくわくこどもまつり A mini festival will be held at the Obihiro Children's Hall during part of the long spring holiday. Different activities will be held for children up to middle schoolers. No registration is required. All activities are free.	Obihiro Children's Hall 帯広市児童会館 0155-24-2434
5/3-5 (Fri-Sun)	Sarabetsu Michi no Eki (Road Stop) 20 Year Anniversary Fair 道の駅20周年記念感謝祭 Michi no Eki Sarabetsu is giving its thanks for 20 years with a fair for everyone to enjoy. Games and performances will be held along with food and vegetable sales booths.	Michi no Eki Sarabetsu 道の駅さらべつ 0155-53-3663

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Thankfully, the スギ *sugi* aren't able to grow in the cold climate of Tokachi.

However, we here in Tokachi aren't completely protected from the spring season suffering that is hay fever! The Japanese alder that also affect people down south is actually a relative of the white birch tree 白樺



shirakaba that is found all over Tokachi. Similar to the Japanese cedar in Honshu, the white birch was planted to help with erosion after the deforestation that happened when the Tokachi area was first developed.

The white birch's pollen increase exponentially in May, bringing runny noses and itchy eyes all over Tokachi. Even if you weren't allergic to birches before, your body can become allergic as your exposure to the pollen increases. Here are some ways you can enjoy the long awaited spring, without (or less) of the hay fever suffering:

Wear a Mask

Many people in Asia wear masks when they have a cold to keep the moisture and their germs in. Masks can also help keep the pollen out! Some masks



even have a built-in filter to really keep the pollen from slipping in.

Wipe Down your Home

Even within the walls of your home, pollen and other allergens can easily get in through any opening. Avoid using a vacuum or broom which can kick the allergens back into the air, where they can easily enter your system. Use a wet cloth and trap in the pollen as you clean.

Take some 抗ヒスタミン剤 *kou hisutamin zai*

Sometimes you can't keep them out of your home or your system! When all else fails, but you need to stop blowing your nose before it falls off, try taking some antihistamines or 抗ヒスタミン剤

kou hisutamin zai. When a foreign substance, such as an allergen like pollen enters your system, your body tries to fight back by releasing histamines.

These histamines are the ones to blame for the runny nose and itchiness. By taking antihistamines, it blocks the histamines from being released.

While the 白樺 *shirakaba* is appealing to the eye, their pollen might not be as kind! If you start to feel more itchiness or other irritation, try some of these tips to get some relief this spring.

※ Any use of these tips are completely at your own risk!

Sources:

http://www.rinya.maff.go.jp/j/sin_riyou/kafun/qanda.html
https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_10/sr10_252.pdf
<https://www.env.go.jp/chemi/anzen/kafun/manual/full.pdf>
http://www.iph.pref.hokkaido.jp/pollen/pollen_info.html

Movies At Cinema Taiyo, in Obihiro

(Nishi 3, Minami 11)
Tel: (0155) 20-1525

Times and movies are subject to change! (for space reasons not all movies are listed)
To confirm, call or check online at: http://www.taiyogroup.jp/cinema/theater/_obihiro/movie.shtml

Title	Language	Dates
Shazam	Jpn Sub/Dub	Until 30th
Avengers: Endgame	2D Jpn Dub or 2D Jpn Sub	All month
Pokemon: Detective Pikachu	Jpn Sub/Dub	From 3rd
Green Book	Jpn Sub	From 10th
Godzilla: King of Monsters	Jpn Sub/Dub	From 31st

Events Continued

When	What	Where/Contact
5/5 (Sun) 9:30-14:00	69th Mountain Cherry Blossom Festival @ Shintoku Shrine 第69回新得神社山桜まつり Barbeque while enjoying the view of Shintoku Town's mountain cherry blossom. Various activities, as well as street-side stalls, will be available!	Shintoku Town Hokkaido Tourist Association 新得町観光協会 0156-64-0522 http://www.shintoku-town.net/
5/11 (Sat) 9:30-13:00	Green and Flower Festa 2019 みどりと花のフェスタ2019 Learn about Obihiro's nature while having some fun at the Green and Flower Festa. Crafts and activities will be available for children, along with a flea market and displays for adults.	Midori Gaoka Park 緑が丘公園内 帯広市みどりの課
5/19 (Sun) 9:30-15:00	40th Hiroo Azalea Festival 第40回 広尾つつじまつり Catch 12,000 <i>rhododendron kaempferi</i> (tsutsuji) Azalea in the peak of their bloom! Get a chance to taste popular food that encapsulates Hiroo, including <i>senin nabe</i> , <i>sharokke</i> burger etc. There will be activities and live performances held throughout the festival.	Hiroo Fisheries, Commerce and Tourism Division 広尾町水産商工観光課 01558-2-0177 (Mon-Fri) http://www.town.hiroo.hokkaido.jp
5/19 (Sun)	Sarabetsu Plum Festival さらべつすもの里まつり Sarabetsu Plum Festival is held during the period when white plum flowers bloom. The 1,000 plum trees is a sight to behold. Furthermore, get to try out activities, as well as purchase special souvenirs and food at the festival.	Sarabetsu Village Tourism Association 更別村観光協会事務局 0155-52-2211 http://www.sarabetsu.jp/sightseeing/event/sumomo/

Obihiro Pioneer can be found at the following locations: Obihiro City Hall, Tokachi International Relations Center, Obihiro University International Center, Obihiro Tourism and Convention Center inside the Obihiro JR Station, Obihiro Public Library, Tokachi Plaza, Cinema Taiyo, Joy English Academy and online at www.city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp (click on "Information for Foreigners")

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