

Spring is here! I almost can't believe how warm it has been here for the past few days, because this is what the summer was like in Cleveland before I came to Japan! Before I get to enjoy the plum blossoms, cherry blossoms, and all the other good things spring in Japan is known for, I have been rudely introduced to the worst part of the season. Cedar pollen! I thought that summer was my least favorite season because of the humidity, but now hay fever in springtime is giving the heat a run for its money.

At home I suffer from mild allergies to mold and dust, and I am always a little bit sick with hay fever in the springtime. Even so, my allergies at home are nothing compared to here in Japan! When I lived in Cleveland and in Washington DC, there were a lot of trees, but I didn't live so close to the mountains or the wilderness. Maybe that is why there seems to be so much more pollen in the air here in Mie. At the same time, I think the main cause of hay fever at home is oak trees, and not cedar, so this might actually be my first time exposed to cedar pollen.

I have been trying to deal with the allergies the best I can, but one thing I cannot bring myself to do is wear a mask. In America, no one but a doctor would ever wear a mask like that, and certainly not out in public! I mentioned to my friends at home that I might consider wearing one, and they asked me to take pictures because they think it would be so funny. I know that it's quite normal in Japan, and that it will probably make my allergies less severe, but I am still embarrassed to wear a mask like that outside of my apartment.

A few weeks ago, the head of this office was kind enough to teach me how to say cedar pollen in Japanese. This has been really useful for me because almost every day I find myself explaining to my friends and coworkers that no, I haven't caught a cold, but I just suffer from hay fever. I hope that this allergy season will be over soon, so I can enjoy the good parts of this season before the long, hot summer comes!