



More Covid infections when pollen count rises

There is an association between pollen in the air and increases in the number of Covid infections. This finding is from a global study in which the Environmental Systems Analysis group was involved.

A team of 150 scientists investigated pollen counts from 130 stations in 31 countries, including the Netherlands, during the coronavirus outbreak. The increase in the number of infections only accelerated once the pollen concentration rose. The researchers suspect that the virus benefits from a weakened immune system due to exposure to pollen. It is known that this happens with other respiratory tract viral infections, such as the common cold — including in people who are not allergic to pollen.

The pollen effect was seen around the world at the start of the epidemic, the researchers note in an article published in PNAS in March 2021. The infection figures increased after an increase in the pollen count with a four-day lag. On average, a rise in the pollen concentration of 100 pollen grains per cubic metre caused the infection rate to grow by 4 per cent. Further research is needed to determine whether the association is causal.

Info: arnold.vanvliet@wur.nl