Hebei to design index that links illness to weather

Hebei will link weather forecasts with health risks, a move to inform people who are sensitive to changes in the weather so that they can take precautionary measures, authorities said.

"We are doing research into the influence of meteorological conditions on diseases and are setting up a database of information on diseases that can be more easily caused due to weather changes," said Zhang Zhongjie, head of a service center at Hebei Provincial Meteorological Bureau.

The index will list the possibility of weather conditions causing various illnesses such as respiratory diseases or skin allergies.

They will be generated based on big data from local environmental and meteorological conditions, and recent patterns in diseases, Zhang said.

According to Zhang, Hebei has been studying the influence of air pollution on public health since last year.

"People are starting to pay attention to the weather and air, because air pollution in recent years has greatly affected their lives," he added.

Ding Xiao, a young mother in Shijiazhuang who has a 10-month-old son, complained about this winter's weather and smoggy air conditions.

"I have become a frequent visitor to hospitals because my son always catches a cold or gets a bad cough when the weather is bad," Ding said, adding that many mothers are like her.

People in the province, which has been severely hit by air pollution in recent years, have complained about local weather.

"After all, it is their health that people are worrying about, rather than just the environment," said Gao Yu, a doctor at the Children's Hospital of Hebei province.

Gao said it's necessary and useful to inform people of the specific weather index in advance.

"People need to know when bad weather is coming and how bad it is, just as they need the air quality index, through which people can know if the air outside is good or not and can decide accordingly whether to do outside activities or whether to wear face masks," Gao said.