

Hay Fever

Hay fever is a common condition also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis. It often runs in families and is more likely to affect people who suffer from asthma and eczema.

Hay fever is an allergic reaction to pollen, usually when it comes into contact with your mouth, nose, eyes and throat. Pollen is a fine powder from plants. The pollen causes the release of a chemical called histamine from cells in the nose, eyes and airways, which cause inflammation.

Hay fever symptoms usually last for the length of the pollen season, often between late March and September. People who are allergic to more than one type of pollen may have symptoms for longer. Some people can have allergic symptoms throughout the entire year, often due to allergies to things like dust mites or pets.

Hay fever symptoms include:

Cough, itchy throat or mouth



Red, itchy, puffy or watery eyes



Feeling tired



Headaches or sinus pain



Sneezing, itchy, blocked or runny nose



Managing your hay fever

There is no cure for hay fever, but you can do things to ease your symptoms when the pollen count is high. This may include avoiding the things which trigger your allergy or taking medication to improve your symptoms.

How can I avoid triggers?





- Stay indoors whenever possible and keep house and car windows closed as much as possible, especially when the pollen count is high (early morning and evenings).
- Avoid cutting grass, large grassy places and camping.
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses.
- Do not dry washing outside to avoid pollen sticking to your clothes.
- Shower and change your clothes after you have been outside to wash pollen off.
- Use petroleum jelly (Vaseline) around your nostrils to trap pollen.
- Dust with a damp cloth and vacuum regularly, you can buy a HEPA filter for your vacuum.
- You could buy a pollen filter for the air vents in the car.
- Avoid drying washing outdoors when the pollen count is high.
- Consider monitoring the pollen count using a website such as the Met Office so that avoidance measures can be used when pollen counts are high.

You can find more information on the symptoms of hay fever and advice on how to avoid triggers here: [Hay fever - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

[Hay Fever: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatments | Patient](#)

What treatments can I buy?

A wide range of medicines can be bought from community pharmacies and supermarkets without needing to see a doctor. Speak to a local pharmacist to get advice on the best treatment for your symptoms and always read the patient information leaflet that is included with the medicine.

<p>Antihistamine tablets or liquid</p> <p>These medicines can ease most hay fever symptoms but may be less good at relieving a blocked nose (nasal congestion).</p>	 <p>Antihistamines are generally more effective when taken regularly and before symptoms begin.</p> <p>Antihistamines are usually divided into 2 main groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• antihistamines that make you feel sleepy, for example, chlorphenamine.• non-drowsy antihistamines that are less likely to make you feel sleepy, for example cetirizine, loratadine and fexofenadine. <p>Your pharmacist will be able to advise which one is the most suitable for you. Some people find certain types work best for them so it can be worth trying different types.</p>
<p>Nasal sprays</p> <p>These medicines usually work well to clear nasal symptoms (itch, sneezing, watering and congestion) and may help ease eye symptoms.</p>	 <p>Steroid nasal sprays don't have an immediate effect but can take a few weeks to work fully. They are best started before the hay-fever season begins and used throughout the season even if your symptoms have improved.</p> <p>Antihistamine nasal sprays also take a while to take full effect but can be useful if other treatments aren't suitable or in addition to other treatments.</p> <p>Nasal decongestant sprays are useful if you suffer from a blocked nose, however, must not be used for more than 7 days as longer use causes rebound congestion and will block your nose up again.</p>
<p>Eye drops</p> <p>Eye drops can be used in addition to other treatments.</p>	 <p>If your eye symptoms are not controlled by tablet or liquid antihistamines, eye drops such as those containing sodium cromoglicate may be useful.</p> <p>If you wear contact lenses, you should check with a community pharmacist or your optician before using eye drops.</p>
<p>Other useful treatments</p>	 <p>Simple pain relief (e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen) can help with headaches and sinus pain.</p>

When should I contact my GP practice?

- If you are experiencing wheezing, breathlessness or tightness in the chest.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- If your symptoms do not improve after taking medicines from the pharmacy.

If you would like this leaflet in a different language or format (including Braille or Easy Read), please contact us at:

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