

## Hay fever

Hay fever, also called 'allergic rhinitis' is caused by allergic reaction to pollen. It is typically worse during between late March and September, where high pollen counts throughout summer months can worsen symptoms. The initial symptoms are similar to cold or flu-like symptoms, and if not managed can impact of quality of sleep and participating in activities.

### Symptoms of hay fever can include:

- Sneezing
- Itchy nose/itchy palate/itchy throats
- Nasal congestion ('blocked' or 'stuffy' nose)
- Runny nose (usually with clear fluid)
- Red/itchy/watery eyes (can become very sore or infected with frequent rubbing)
- Post nasal drip (the sensation of mucus running down the back of the throat)
- Cough
- Wheezing/asthma symptoms/tight chest/breathlessness
- Sinus inflammation/pain
- Feeling of itch in ear/ear blockage
- Nose bleeds -This may be due to the lining of the nose being itchy and is often rubbed or scratched.

Unfortunately there is no cure or way of preventing hay fever, however there are some measures that can ease symptoms, such as:

### Do

- Apply petroleum jelly (Vaseline®) around your nostrils to trap pollen
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses to prevent pollen getting into your eyes
- Shower and change your clothes after you have been outside to wash pollen off
- Stay indoors whenever possible
- Keep windows and doors shut as much as possible
- Vacuum your home regularly and dust with a damp cloth
- Purchase a pollen filter for the air vents in your car and a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter

### Don't

- do not cut grass or walk on grass
- do not spend too much time outside
- do not keep fresh flowers in the house
- do not smoke or be around smoke – it can worsen symptoms
- do not dry clothes outside – they can catch pollen
- do not let pets into the house if possible – they can carry pollen indoors

Click [here](#) for more information on Hay fever management from Allergy UK

Click [here](#) for more information from the NHS website on Hay fever

Speak to your **local community pharmacy** to help manage your hay fever.

Pharmacists can suggest and advise on over-the-counter medicines such as antihistamine tablets, drops, steroid nasal sprays and many other remedies. These items tend to be cheaper when purchasing than on prescription.

### **Treatment**

Medication used either blocks (antihistamine) or reduces inflammation (nasal steroids) caused by the allergic response.

Antihistamines help with mild and are most effective for sneezing, itchy-runny nose and itchy eyes. For moderate to severe symptoms or blocked noses it is recommended to use topical corticosteroid nasal spray; these can be purchased at your local pharmacy.

Nasal sprays that contain decongestants maybe useful on worst days for additional relief of congestion but should only be used short term; for no more than a few days at a time. These can be purchased at your local pharmacy.

Eye drops are available over-the-counter to help with mild to moderate itching and watering. In severe cases, your GP may prescribe more targeted eye drops, for severe allergic eye symptoms.

All treatments should be taken regular to control symptoms, only taking medication occasionally is less effective once symptoms have established.

If trying the above provides little to no relief, and the severity of symptoms is affecting your quality of life, please contact your GP to investigate further and they may prescribe additional or alternatives required on prescription.

If all the above fails, your GP may refer you for immunotherapy. This usually starts in winter about 3 months before hay fever season. Please note this is a specialist service and may not be available in your local area.

Information and content supplied by [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk) and [allergyuk.org](http://allergyuk.org)