

Hayfever (Seasonal allergic rhinitis)

Hayfever is a common condition also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis and affects around 1 in 5 people in the UK. It often runs in families and is more likely to affect people who suffer from asthma and eczema.

It is an allergic condition where the body's immune system overreacts to substances that are usually harmless, for example pollen from grasses, flowers, weeds or trees. The pollen causes the release of a chemical called histamine from cells in the nose, eyes and airways, which cause inflammation. Some people suffer symptoms all year round; they can be allergic to indoor allergens such as house dust mites, pets and indoor moulds. This is called perennial allergic rhinitis.

Symptoms include:

Sneezing - Itchy, blocked or runny nose - Red, itchy, puffy or watery eyes - Itchy throat - Headaches and sinus pain - Fatigue

Managing your hayfever

The severity of symptoms can vary, some people need medication to manage their symptoms and others can manage their condition by avoiding triggers. **If treatment is needed a wide range of medications can be purchased from community pharmacies and supermarkets without seeing a doctor. These medicines are often cheaper than medicines on prescription.**

How can I avoid triggers?

- Keep house and car windows closed, especially when the pollen count is high (early morning between 7am to 9am and evenings between 5pm and 7pm).
- Avoid large grassy areas, woodland, cutting the grass, pollutants and car fumes.
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses.
- When you get in from outside wash your hands, face, hair, rinse your eyes and change your clothes.
- If possible stay indoors when the pollen count is high.
- Use petroleum jelly inside your nose to block inhalation of pollen.
- Keep your house clean and wear a mask and glasses when doing house work.
- Don't dry washing outside to avoid pollen sticking to your clothes.
- You could buy a pollen filter for the air vents in the car.

When should I see a GP?

- If you are experiencing wheezing, breathlessness or tightness in the chest.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- If your symptoms are not relieved by over the counter treatments in combination with measures to reduce your exposure to pollen.



What treatments can I buy?

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.

Examples of products available to buy include:

Antihistamine tablets and syrup

Effective if they are taken **before symptoms start**.

Cetirizine

Generic preparations widely available from pharmacies and supermarkets.

Brands include: Zirtek®, Piriteze®, Pollenshield® (tablets) and Zirtek® 1mg/ml Oral Solution, Benadryl Allergy® 1mg/ml Oral Solution.

Licence restrictions: Tablets not to be sold for children under 6 years of age. Oral solution suitable for children aged 2-5 years.

Chlorphenamine maleate

Generic preparations widely available from pharmacies and supermarkets.

Brands include: Hayleve®, Piriton® and Pollenase® tablets; Piriton® 2mg/5ml Oral Solution.

Licence restrictions: Tablets suitable for 6 years & above. Liquid suitable for children over 1 year of age.

Loratadine

Brand is Clarityn® tablets & Solution.

Licence restrictions: Tablets and solution suitable from 2 years & above.

Acrivastine

Brands include Benadryl Allergy Relief®

Licence restrictions: Not suitable for under 12 years.

<p>Nasal sprays</p> <p>Useful if you suffer nasal symptoms and can be used instead of, or in addition to, antihistamine tablets.</p>	<p>Steroid nasal sprays suppress the allergic reaction and inflammation of hayfever and take about 3 days to work. They are best started before the hayfever season begins and used throughout the season even if your symptoms have improved.</p> <p>Products include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beclometasone 50mcg/actuation Nasal Spray – Beconase® (suitable for adults, 18 years & above) - Fluticasone propionate 0.05% Nasal Spray – Pirinase® (suitable for adults, 18 years & above) - Triamcinolone 55mcg/dose Nasal Spray – Nasacort® (suitable for adults, 18 years & above) - Xylometazoline Hydrochloride 0.1% Nasal Spray - Otrivine Allergy Relief® (not suitable for under 12 years of age). Not to be used for longer than 7 days. - Non-steroid nasal sprays include Prevalin Allergy Relief Nasal Spray® (for adults and children over 12 years)
<p>Eye drops</p> <p>Can be used in addition to antihistamine tablets, or instead of if you suffer from eye symptoms relating to hayfever.</p>	<p>Products include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sodium cromoglicate 2% eye drops – Brands include Opitcrom Allergy®, Murine Hayfever Relief®, Optrex Allergy® - Suitable for adults and children over 6 years. - Other preparations - Xylometazoline 0.05% and antazoline 0.5% (Otrivine Antistin® eye drops) – Suitable for adults and children over 12 years of age.
<p>Other useful treatments</p>	<p>Simple pain relief (e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen) can help with headaches and sinus pain. Throat lozenges can help ease tickly throats and palates. Decongestant tablets can help to relieve blocked noses.</p>

More information is available at:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Hay-fever/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/hayfever/Pages/Hayfeverhome.aspx>

<http://www.patient.co.uk/health/hay-fever>