

How to treat and improve your symptoms of Hay Fever

What is Hay Fever?

Hay fever (also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis) is a common condition in the UK and usually occurs during the spring or summer. It affects one in five people in the UK and is caused when the body overreacts to substances (allergens) such as pollen from grass or flowers. This leads to symptoms such as sneezing, itchy eyes, runny nose or a blocked nose. The severity of symptoms can vary from person to person.

Treatment of Hay Fever

Most of the common symptoms can be treated using a variety of methods such as antihistamine tablets, steroid nose sprays and eye drops. The symptoms can have a serious impact on the well-being of some people. There is currently no cure for the disorder, however, most people are able to relieve symptoms with treatment to a bearable level on most (if not all) days.

Where can you get treatment?

You can purchase all treatments from your local pharmacy and antihistamine tablets and some hay fever sprays are available at supermarkets.

- Antihistamine tablets can also be used to relieve eye and nasal symptoms except nasal congestion. Oral tablets to be taken once daily or as required. It's best to avoid alcohol while taking antihistamines.
- Eye drops can be used up to four times a day to relieve itchy, watery eyes.
- Over the counter steroid sprays are available from pharmacies. They treat all hay fever symptoms including eye symptoms. They are best started two weeks before the hay fever season starts as per allergy guidance.
- Ask about own brand labels as these are often cheaper than the branded products. Some may have restrictions on sale e.g. for under 18s or for some medical conditions.



Recommended life style tips to help reduce hay fever symptoms

Lifestyle factors, such as stress and exercise, can have a major impact on hay fever.

The following advice may help you to reduce the symptoms:

Do	Don't
✓ put Vaseline around your nostrils to trap pollen	✗ cut grass or walk on grass
✓ wear wraparound sunglasses to stop pollen getting into your eyes	✗ smoke or be around smoke – it makes your symptoms worse
✓ shower and change your clothes after you've been outside to wash pollen off	✗ let pets into the house if possible – they can carry pollen indoors
✓ stay indoors whenever possible	✗ spend too much time outside
✓ keep windows and doors shut as much as possible	✗ dry clothes outside – they can catch pollen
✓ vacuum regularly and dust with a damp cloth	✗ keep fresh flowers in the house
✓ keep car windows closed. You can buy a pollen filter for the air vents in your car, which will need to be changed every time the car is serviced.	

Medical conditions that may be affected by Hay Fever

If you suffer from conditions affecting your breathing such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) it is likely that these may worsen when you have hay fever. Make sure you use your preventer inhaler as prescribed and keep your reliever medication with you at all times. If you experience increasing breathlessness which cannot be relieved easily with your inhalers contact your GP. They will advise on immediate action and complete a review of your medication.

Looking after yourself (self-care)

Hay fever is a minor illness that is suitable for self-care. We all have a responsibility to look after our own health and keeping a well-stocked medicine cabinet can help you treat minor illnesses and injuries at home without needing to see a GP.

