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| **Hayfever**  Patient information |
| **About 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.  Hayfever is caused by the body’s defences overreacting to pollen released into the air by plants. The pollen causes the release of a substance called Histamine from cells in the skin. Histamine stimulates the allergic reaction that causes many of the symptoms such as sneezing, sore and runny eyes, blocked nose and ears, sinus pain and tickly throat or itchy palate. • Different pollens are present at different times of the spring and summer, so when you are affected depends upon which pollen you are allergic to. • So, what’s the most effective way to treat hayfever? Staying away from pollen is the ideal prevention – but not always practical.  **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 (Vaseline) inside your nose to block inhalation of pollen. * Keep your house clean (vacuuming and damp dusting) 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. |
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| **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.  These treatments are usually cheaper to buy than get on prescription, and in the vast majority of cases are identical to those available on prescription.  Examples of products available to buy include:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Antihistamine tablets and syrup**  Generally effective at controlling symptoms of hayfever. | Antihistamines are more effective if they are taken before symptoms start rather than after. Some older antihistamine tablets such as chlorphenamine (Piriton) can cause drowsiness.  Newer antihistamines are less likely to cause drowsiness and include cetirizine (Piriteze, Zirtek), loratadine (Clarityn), acrivastine (Benadryl) and Fexofenadine (Allevia). If you drive or operate machinery ask the community pharmacist which tablets would be best for you.  Fexofenadine 120 mg is now available to purchase from shops or pharmacies for adults and children 12 years and over. | | **Nasal sprays**  Useful if you suffer nasal symptoms and can be used instead of, or in addition to, antihistamine tablets. | Steroid nasal sprays suppress the allergic reaction and inflammation of hayfever and take about three days to work. They are best started before the hayfever season begins and used throughout the season even if your symptoms have improved. They include beclometasone, mometasone and fluticasone.  Nasal decongestant sprays such as xylometazoline are useful if you suffer from a blocked nose, however they can only be used for seven days as longer use can cause rebound congestion and block your nose up again. You may find inhalants (eucalyptus, menthol and Olbas Oil) helpful to ease blocked and stuffy noses. | | **Eye drops** | If your eye symptoms are not controlled by oral antihistamines, eye drops containing sodium cromoglicate (opticrom allergy) or antazoline / xylometazoline  (Opticrom anthistine) may be useful.  If you wear contact lenses you should check with a community pharmacist or your optician before using eye drops. | | **Other useful treatments** | 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 should relieve blocked noses. | |
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**When should I see a GP?**

• If you are experiencing wheezing, breathlessness or tightness in the chest.

• If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

* If the medicine is not licensed to be sold for your age group.

• If your symptoms are not relieved by over the counter treatments in combination with measures to reduce your exposure to pollen.

**More information –** All accessed 3/6/25

1. See more at: [Hay fever - NHS](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hay-fever/)

2. See more at: [Hay Fever: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatments](https://patient.info/allergies-blood-immune/hay-fever-leaflet)

3. Confirm the pollen count by checking on the Met Office website [Pollen forecast - Met Office](https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/seasonal-advice/pollen-forecast)