

Patient Information Leaflet

Hay Fever



Provided by Stow Surgery





WHAT IS HAY FEVER?

Approximately 10-15% of the population suffer from seasonal rhinitis, otherwise known as hay fever or pollen allergy. It is caused by an allergic reaction to pollen, typically when it comes into contact with your eyes, nose, mouth and throat. Although pollen itself is harmless, in hay fever sufferers, it is the body's immune system that overreacts to the allergen and can cause the following symptoms:

- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Itchy, red, watery eyes
- Runny or blocked nose
- Itching of the throat
- Loss of smell
- Wheeze
- Difficulty in breathing
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Headache

Pollen is a fine powder that is produced by plants, trees, grass and weeds during the Spring and Summer months. Hay fever is usually worst between March and September and can be especially bad when it is warm, humid, and windy. The hay fever season also seems to be getting longer; this is likely due to changes in temperature, weather conditions and increased immune sensitivity in people.

HOW IS HAY FEVER TREATED?

Hay fever can be treated by using methods to limit pollen exposure, over the counter treatments or by using prescription medication. Although there are many treatments available, there is currently no cure for hay fever and the symptoms may last for several weeks or months.

Limiting pollen exposure

- Place Vaseline around your nostrils to trap the pollen.
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses to limit pollen getting into the eyes.
- Shower and change clothes after being outdoors to wash the pollen off.
- Stay indoors whenever possible.
- Keep windows and doors shut as much as possible.
- Damp dust and vacuum regularly.
- Use a pollen/HEPA filter.
- Dry washing indoors



Over the counter treatments

Antihistamines: These medications block the action of histamine, which is released by the body when it detects something harmful, or pollen in the case of hay fever. There are many different types and are classed as either drowsy, such as Piriton® (chlorphenamine), or non-drowsy, such as loratadine, cetirizine or fexofenadine. They come in various forms such as tablets, liquids, nasal sprays, or eye-drops. Side-effects can include drowsiness, headache, dry mouth, and nausea. The more readily available anti histamines are:

- Piriton
- Cetirizine
- Loratadine
- Acrivastine

Steroid nasal sprays: Steroid nasal sprays contain man-made hormones which act in the body to reduce inflammation and swelling. They work on the lining of the nose and reduce symptoms such as sneezing and blocked nose. They can cause some side-effects including dryness, stinging, nosebleeds, or taste disturbance. Some are available over the counter, and some are prescription only. The most common nasal steroid is:

- Beconase

Eye-drops: If eye symptoms are the main feature, using topical antihistamine eye drops may control the problem. These are also available over the counter or on prescription. The active ingredient we recommend looking for in any eye drop is:

- Sodium Cromoglicate

Approximately 10% of hay fever sufferers will not obtain relief by simply using over the counter treatments.

Triple Therapy

Patients suffering with hay fever are advised to use triple therapy to control their symptoms,

- Take an anti histamine daily to reduce histamine, we suggest changing the type of anti histamine every 3-4 weeks, for example switching from cetirizine to loratadine.
- Use a nasal spray daily to reduce nasal congestion, sneezing and irritation
- Use eye drops

We would also suggest starting any treatments for hay fever at least one month before you would normally get symptoms, this will help reduce the impact of symptoms as the season begins.

Prescription medications

There are very few prescription medicines available to help with hay fever, there are some prescription strength nasal steroids that may be beneficial if all the above options are not helping

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Other Sources of Information

[Pollen forecast - Met Office](#)

[Hay fever - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Hay Fever | Allergy UK | National Charity](#)