



**ANWAR ENT**  
The Right Choice For Your Health

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## Hay fever

### What is Hayfever?

Hayfever is the common name given to cold-like symptoms caused by inhaling plant pollens at certain times of the year.

#### The UK pollen season:

Tree Pollens	March – April
Grass Pollen	May - July Peak in June and July
Weed Pollen	June – August
Mould Spores	September – October

When people who are allergic to plant pollen breathe it in, it causes the lining inside the airway to swell, this is called inflammation. It commonly affects the nose (rhinitis), eyes (conjunctivitis) throat and ears and can affect the lungs. Inflammation of the lining inside the nose is called rhinitis. Hayfever is often referred to as **Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis**.

It occurs at particular times of the year when the various plants release their pollen. Pollen is one of many allergens which can cause allergic responses.

Hayfever affects one in four people in the UK and approximately nine out of ten hayfever sufferers are allergic to grass pollen. Some individuals are allergic to both tree and grass pollen and will have symptoms that last for several months of the year.

Hayfever often starts in childhood and regularly occurs at the same time each year. Sometimes the symptoms of hayfever are experienced all year round and this is referred to as perennial rhinitis. Both seasonal and perennial rhinitis can lead to asthma development. In known asthmatics, untreated hayfever increases the likelihood of having a severe asthma attack during the pollen season.

### Why is hayfever seasonal?

Plants only disperse their pollen during their growing season and therefore individual plant pollen is not in the air all year round.

Plants release their pollen at the same time every year, when the weather is dry. Wet weather conditions will influence pollen dispersal and will affect how long it remains in the air. Throughout the pollen season, specialist pollen monitoring centres trap pollen and calculate the daily concentration of the various airborne pollens. The daily pollen count is broadcast by media outlets, along with the weather forecast and is reported as low, medium or high.

Highly sensitive individuals can suffer hayfever symptoms even when the pollen count is low. When the pollen count is high, most people sensitised to the pollen are likely to have symptoms.

#### Symptoms of hayfever include:

- Itchy nose, with or without itchy ears, throat and eyes
- Sneezing
- Watery discharge from the nose and sometimes eyes
- Blocked nose
- Some people who are allergic to tree pollen also experience irritation in the throat when eating certain raw fruit and vegetables, such as apples and celery. This is due to a cross-reaction with pollen and is referred to as oral allergy syndrome.
- Some sufferers have poor quality sleep, reduced ability to concentrate and function effectively at work or at school. Examination performance is reduced especially if the sufferers are on sedating antihistamine medication.
- Some sufferers are so severely affected that they cannot go outdoors during the pollen season.

### How to diagnosis hayfever?

The regular seasonal pattern of symptom often allows self-diagnosis. For some people, however, symptoms may be less defined or even persistent for several months, and therefore allergy testing may be required. Allergy skin prick testing at an NHS allergy clinic is the most reliable way to confirm hayfever.

*A skin prick test is carried out by placing a small drop of fluid containing an allergen on the skin. The skin is then pricked through the liquid. If a person is sensitised to the allergen the body releases a chemical called histamine at the site of the prick causing a red itchy bump to occur. This reaction indicates that a person is likely to have symptoms of allergy to that particular allergen.*

There are also blood tests for people on whom skin prick tests are not possible: people with severe eczema or very sensitive skin and those who can not stop taking their antihistamine medication because of troublesome symptoms. A blood test can be done, but is no more sensitive than skin prick testing, and it takes time for the results to come back.

Your doctor will need to consider the allergy test results together with the symptoms. Some people with positive allergy test have little or no hay fever symptom.

### Treatment of hayfever

#### 1. Avoiding exposure to pollen in the air

- Be aware of the pollen count
- Avoid the countryside when the pollen count is high
- Keep your windows shut when travelling in a car and ensure your car has a pollen filter
- Avoid being out doors at times when the pollen count is high, for example, when the air is warming in the mornings and cooling in the evenings
- Keep the bedroom windows closed early morning and evening when the pollen concentration is high
- Hide your pillow under the bed covers during the day to prevent pollen from settling on it when the windows are open
- Wear glasses to protect your eyes from pollen when outside
- Wash your face and hair and change your clothes when coming indoors on days when the pollen count is high

- Wipe Vaseline around your nose and eyes to trap pollen and prevent some from entering your nose and eyes
- Consider using a nasal air filter - [www.nasalaifilter.com](http://www.nasalaifilter.com)
- Carry out nasal douching - [www.sterimamasal.co.uk](http://www.sterimamasal.co.uk)  
[www.neilmed.com/uk](http://www.neilmed.com/uk)

#### 2. Medication

For many people hayfever symptoms can be controlled with over the counter medication: steroid nose sprays, antihistamine tablets/syrup/nose sprays and eye drops. Ask a pharmacist to guide you if you have never bought this type of medication before.

Saline sprays/ douches are not medicated but will support nasal hygiene, wash away any trapped allergens such as pollen and therefore help reduce symptoms. Adults and children will benefit from nasal douching as preparation to clean the nose before using a steroid nasal spray. This is also useful after being exposed to airborne allergens in everyday activities.

### Over the Counter Medications

#### Which medication is most effective for which symptom?

SYMPTOM	MEDICATION	EXAMPLE
Blocked nose	Steroid nasal spray are the most effective treatment for all nasal symptoms and may also help reduce eye symptoms. They can be used together with eye drops and antihistamine medication.	steroid nasal spray e.g. Fluticasone or Beclomethasone
Itchy eyes Watery eyes	Eye drops Chromone eye drops Antihistamine tablets / syrups or eye drops	Eye drops e.g. sodium cromoglycate Oral tablets / syrups e.g. Loratadine or Cetirizine
Itchy nose Runny nose	Antihistamine tablets/ syrups or nasal sprays	Oral tablets or syrups e.g. Loratadine or Cetirizine and or nasal spray e.g. Azelastine