

Hay fever

Hay fever (seasonal allergic rhinitis) is an allergy to pollen, pollen is the fine powder produced by plants, trees or flowers to fertilize other trees, plants or flowers. Grass pollen allergy is the most common; the grass pollen season is usually from May to July. Tree pollens usually affect people from March to May and weed pollen tends to be early spring to early autumn. Hay fever is very common and affects approximately 2 out of every 10 people in the UK.

Symptoms

Common symptoms include:

Runny, itchy and/or blocked nose
Sneezing
Itchy eyes
Watery, red eyes
Sinus problems
Itchy throat



Less common symptoms include:

Loss of smell
Headaches
Face pain
Sweats

When bad, symptoms can affect sleep, school and work. Asthma sufferers tend to get wheezy and breathless and hay fever sufferers are more likely to get Asthma. Hay fever can run in families.

What to do if you think you have hay fever

See your GP for a diagnosis, who will then suggest treatment such as:

- Antihistamine nose spray
- Antihistamine tablets
- Steroid nose spray
- Eye drops
- Steroid tablets for severe cases
- Occasional allergy testing



Avoiding pollen

Avoiding pollen is impossible, but keep an eye on the pollen count and if you're over 50, you could:

- Stay indoors as much as possible, and keep windows and doors shut.
- Avoid cutting grass, large grassy places, and camping.
- Shower and wash your hair after being outdoors, especially after going to the countryside.
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses when you are out.
- Keep car windows closed, and consider buying a pollen filter for the air vents in your car. These should be changed at every service.

More Information

Allergy UK - A charity for people with allergy, food intolerance and chemical sensitivity.

Allergy Helpline: 01322 619898

Web: www.allergyuk.org

NHS: www.nhs.uk/conditions/Hay-fever/Pages/Introduction.aspx

