



# Hay fever

## A pharmacist can help with hay fever

Speak to your pharmacist if you have hay fever. They can give advice and suggest the best treatments, like antihistamine drops, tablets or nasal sprays to help with:

- itchy and watery eyes and sneezing
- a blocked nose

## Antihistamines

Antihistamines are probably the best known type of allergy medication, and most are readily available from a pharmacy without prescription.

However, there are a number of different types of antihistamines; some have been used for many years, some are improvements on old drugs, and new antihistamines are being developed all the time.

While antihistamines used to have a reputation for making people drowsy, more modern antihistamines only occasionally have those side effects and are only taken once a day.

## Check if you have hay fever

Symptoms of hay fever include:

- sneezing and coughing
- a runny or blocked nose
- itchy, red or watery eyes
- itchy throat, mouth, nose and ears
- loss of smell
- pain around your temples and forehead
- headache
- earache
- feeling tired

If you have asthma, you might also:

- have a tight feeling in your chest
- be short of breath
- wheeze and cough

Hay fever will last for weeks or months, unlike a cold, which usually goes away after 1 to 2 weeks.

## What is Hay Fever?

Hay fever is a common allergic reaction which occurs at particular times of the year. It is known as seasonal rhinitis, sharing symptoms with perennial (year round) allergic rhinitis, but occurring as a reaction to pollen from grass, trees and weeds during the early spring and summer months. It can affect both adults and children.

## What Causes Hay Fever?

It is caused when the body makes allergic antibodies (IgE) to certain substances, such as pollen, house dust mites or mould, which are known as allergens.

Grass pollen is the most common allergen (May to July), but tree (February to June) and weed (June to September) pollens can also cause the allergic reaction we know as hay fever.

In perennial allergic rhinitis the symptoms continue all year round and usually relate to indoor allergens, such as house dust mites, pets, including birds, or moulds.

Information taken from [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and [www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)

## How to treat hay fever yourself

There's currently no cure for hay fever and you can't prevent it. But you can do things to ease your symptoms when the pollen count is high.

### Do

- put Vaseline around your nostrils to trap pollen
- wear wraparound sunglasses to stop pollen getting into your eyes
- shower and change your clothes after you've been outside to wash pollen off
- stay indoors whenever possible
- keep windows and doors shut as much as possible
- vacuum regularly and dust with a damp cloth
- buy a pollen filter for the air vents in your car and a vacuum cleaner with a special HEPA filter

### Don't

- cut grass or walk on grass
- spend too much time outside
- keep fresh flowers in the house
- smoke or be around smoke – it makes your symptoms worse
- dry clothes outside – they can catch pollen
- let pets into the house if possible – they can carry pollen indoors