

## How long will I have hay fever?

Hay fever symptoms are more in young people and can be less troublesome as you get older. At present, it is not possible to predict whose hay fever will get better and whose will remain. Some patients will go on to develop asthma, which is commonly recognised as a persistent wheeze and may require inhalers.

## Met Office pollen calendar for the UK

This table shows the times of the year when pollens from different trees and grasses are highest.



<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/health/public/pollen-forecast>

## How can I contact you if I need to?

# Hay-fever (Allergic Rhinitis)

## Information for parents and carers

[www.allergynorthwest.nhs.uk](http://www.allergynorthwest.nhs.uk)

Seasonal allergic rhinitis or hay fever is a very common allergy in the UK and affects a quarter of people. Hay fever can affect daily activities, sleep, concentration and performance at school. It usually occurs in summer when people are outside.

### What is hay fever?

Hay fever or allergic rhinitis is caused by allergy to grass and/or tree pollen. Exposure to the pollen causes irritation of the lining of the nose, eyes and throat. Asthma and eczema can also be worse during the pollen season.

### What are the symptoms of hay fever?

Hay fever usually affects both the nose and eyes. Nose symptoms include itching, sneezing, watery nasal discharge (runny nose) and blockage. Eyes can be itchy and look red and swollen. The throat may also be itchy. Some people may also suffer from headache and the blocked nose makes it difficult to smell.

### Why does it happen?

Some people with hay fever are very “atopic”. Atopy is the tendency to have allergies (including eczema, asthma, allergic rhinitis and food allergy) this tendency is partly decided by:

- Genes
- Exposure to pollen

Some people with hay fever had eczema in early life as well as food allergies and asthma. Most develop hay fever for the first time as a teenager.

### How is it diagnosed?

Symptoms are usually easy to recognise. Skin prick or blood tests can be done by your doctor to confirm the cause of the allergy.

### How is it avoided?

Avoiding pollen is difficult. However, the following **may** help when the pollen count is high.

- Avoid being outdoors in the early morning and evening, or after a thunder storm when pollen levels are highest.
- Sleep with the bedroom window closed
- Keep car windows shut when travelling
- Travel to beaches rather than open grassy areas during the pollen season
- After being outdoors, wash hands and face.
- Remove and wash clothes. Avoid hanging clothes on washing lines during high pollen count days
- Take holidays to regions with lower pollen counts than home.

### How is it treated?

- For most people only need a non drowsy antihistamine (cetirizine or loratadine; not Piriton which is sedative and only lasts part of the day). If you still get symptoms despite taking one dose, you can safely take a second dose.
- Nasal steroid sprays are good for nose symptoms. These are effective, easy to use and advice will be given during your clinic appointment. Sprays act as preventers and so you will get most benefit if they are taken before your symptoms start and you continue to use them regularly during the pollen season.
- Eye drops can be very helpful for patients with eye symptoms. There are many different types. Sometimes nasal steroid sprays also help eye symptoms.
- If using these medicines still does not control your symptoms then specific immunotherapy may reduce allergy to grass pollen. These are available from specialist allergy clinics.