

Can children outgrow their hay fever?

Hay fever symptoms are more common 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 also suffer from asthma and require inhalers.

Met Office pollen calendar for the UK

People with hay fever do not have allergies to all pollens. Pollen from different plants vary during the year. Tree pollen tends to be highest in spring, grass pollen is highest in summer and many weed pollens are highest in autumn:

- tree pollen (e.g. Hazel, Yew, Alder, Elm, Birch) counts highest in February and March
- grass pollen counts highest in May to August.
- weed pollen (e.g. Rape seed, Nettle, Mugwort) counts highest in May to September

Where can I find more information on hay fever?

Allergy UK	https://www.allergyuk.org/
Met Office	www.metoffice.gov.uk/health/public/pollen-forecast

How can I contact you if I need to?



North West Paediatric Allergy Network

Hay-fever (Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis)

Information for parents and carers

www.allergynorthwest.nhs.uk

What is hay fever?

Hay fever, also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis, is a very common allergy in the UK affecting 1 in 4 people. It can affect daily activities, sleep, concentration, and performance at school.

Why does it happen?

Hay fever or allergic rhinitis is caused by allergy to grass and/or tree pollen. It usually occurs in spring and summer when tree and grass pollen counts are high. 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.

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 determined by genes and exposure to pollen.

What are the symptoms of hay fever?

Hay fever usually affects both the nose and eyes. Symptoms may be confused with the common cold.

- **nose symptoms** include itching, sneezing, watery nasal discharge (runny nose), blockage and poor smell
- **eye symptoms** include itchy, red swollen eyes
- the throat may also be itchy. Some people may also suffer from headaches.

How is it diagnosed?

People tend to be allergic to only some plants or grasses, and skin prick or blood tests done by your doctor can confirm the cause of the allergy.

How can the symptoms be avoided?

Avoiding pollen is difficult. Download a pollen count App or check it out on TV or the internet during the summer.

The following **may** help when the pollen count is high:

- avoid being outdoors in the early morning and evening, or after a thunderstorm when pollen count is highest
- after going outside before bed, wash hands, face, and hair
- remove and wash clothes. Avoid hanging clothes on washing lines during high pollen count days
- sleep with the bedroom window closed
- keep car windows shut when travelling
- travel to beaches rather than open grassy areas during the pollen season
- take holidays to regions with lower pollen counts than home

How is it treated?

- **non-drowsy antihistamine** (cetirizine or loratadine; not Piriton which is sedative) is easy to take and often provides immediate relief. If you still get symptoms despite taking one dose, you can safely take a second dose within 24 hours.
- **nasal steroid sprays** act as preventers. For most benefit, the sprays should be used from when symptoms start and continued regularly throughout the pollen season. They are more appropriate in older children. Advice on how to use the device can be given during your clinic appointment or found on our website.
- **eye drops** can be helpful for patients with eye symptoms. There are many different types. Sometimes nasal steroid sprays also help eye symptoms.
- **specific immunotherapy** (allergy shots) may be considered by an allergy specialist if symptoms are still troublesome and poorly controlled with the above medicines.