



HEALTH INFORMATION

Hay Fever

What is Hay Fever?

Hay fever, also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis, is a very common condition that affects 20% of people in the UK. It is caused by an allergy to airborne substances such as grass or hay pollens, which affects the upper respiratory passages (nose, sinus, throat and eyes).

Hay fever usually occurs during the spring and summer months. Exactly when you get it depends on which pollens you are allergic to. From May to July grass and flowers are in pollen, making these the most common cause of hay fever. During spring, from March to May, pollens from trees are the most common cause of hay fever. Some people do get hay fever into the autumn months, however this is rare and is usually caused by weeds such as nettles and docks, late flowering plants, and mould spores.

Prevention

- Stay indoors when pollen counts are high
- Avoid going outside in the early evening when pollen counts are highest
- Keep windows and doors shut in the house
- Avoid cutting grass, playing or walking in grassy areas, and camping
- Change your clothes and take a shower after being outdoors to remove the pollen
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses to stop pollen getting in your eyes when you are outdoors
- Keep car windows closed, and consider buying a pollen filter for the air vents in your car
- Do not keep fresh flowers in the house
- Vacuum and damp dust regularly
- Keep pets out of the house during the hay fever season

Medication

Many people with hay fever find that medicines are essential to help them through the season.

The main treatments are:

- **Antihistamines** - inhibit the effects of histamines, which are released during an allergic reaction and cause the symptoms of hay fever.
- **Steroids** - reduce inflammation in the nose or eyes.
- **Sodium cromoglycate** - prevents allergic reactions in the nose and eyes.
- **Decongestants** - may help to unblock the nose, but may worsen the problem if used long-term.
- **Desensitisation** - a form of vaccine against pollen, which involves a long course of injections containing very tiny amounts of pollen so the body can learn to deal with it without a reaction.

For more information

www.asthma.org.uk/all_about_asthma/hay_fever_rhinitis/

www.medigold-health.com

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