

St George's Surgery Information Sheet - Hay fever

Hay fever is usually worse between late March and September, especially when it's warm, humid and windy. This is when the pollen count is at its highest.

How to Treat Hay Fever Yourself

There's currently no cure for hay fever and you cannot 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 have 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 HEPA filter

Don't

- do not cut grass or walk on grass
- do not spend too much time outside
- do not keep fresh flowers in the house
- do not smoke or be around smoke – it makes your symptoms worse
- do not dry clothes outside – they can catch pollen
- do not let pets into the house if possible – they can carry pollen indoors

Medication for Hay Fever

There are 3 main groups of medications used to treat hay fever. These can all be purchased over the counter from your local pharmacy who will be able to offer advice on your symptoms. Your GP is not able to issue these on NHS prescription.

Antihistamine tablets e.g. Loratidine, Cetirizine

Antihistamines are medicines often used to relieve symptoms of allergies, such as hay fever.

All anti-histamines for hay fever are now available to buy over the counter (including fexofenadine which was previously a prescription only medication).

Anti-histamines should be taken daily during the hay fever season.

Liquid forms of anti-histamine are available for children over the age of 1 year old.

Steroid Nasal Sprays e.g. Beconase or Flixonase

Hay Fever nasal sprays containing an anti-inflammatory or steroid can be effective for treating hay fever symptoms if used regularly. It can take up to 2 weeks before you start to notice a beneficial effect and so it is important to use regularly and to start using before the start of the hay fever season.

Nasal sprays containing beclomethasone or fluticasone can be purchased over the counter.

Steroid nasal sprays can be purchased over the counter by adults 18 years and over.

Allergy Eye Drops

Eye drops containing sodium cromoglycate can be effective in treating eye symptoms associated with hay fever. They can be used up to FOUR times a day.

Allergy eye drops can be purchased over the counter for children over the age of 6 years old.

When To Contact Your GP

It is safe to use anti-histamine tablets, steroid nasal sprays and hay fever eye drops together and some patients require a combination of all 3 to manage their symptoms.

Please do not contact your GP to request a prescription for hay fever medication. We are no longer able to issue this on prescription.

Please do not contact your GP for advice on the management of hay fever unless you have tried all three of the above medications (anti-histamines, steroid nasal sprays and eye drops) bought over the counter from your local pharmacy for at least 2 weeks.

If your child is suffering from the symptoms of hay fever then please do not contact your GP for advice unless you have tried all of the above medications suitable for their age.

References

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hay-fever/>