



Oak Tree Health Centre
Tyne Avenue
Didcot
OX11 7GD
T 01235 810 099
F 01235 815 181
www.oaktreehc.co.uk

Patient Information Leaflet - Hay fever (seasonal rhinitis)

What is hay fever?

Hay fever is an allergic condition where the body's immune system overreacts to substances that are usually harmless, for example pollen from grasses, flowers, weeds or trees. The pollen causes the release of a chemical called histamine from cells in the nose, eyes and airways, which cause inflammation.

What are the symptoms?

- Sneezing
- Itchy, blocked, runny nose
- Red, itchy puffy or watery eyes
- Itchy throat
- Headaches and sinus pain
- Wheezing

How can I avoid the triggers?

- Keep house and car windows closed, especially when the pollen counts are high (between 7am and 9am and between 5pm and 7pm)
- Avoid grassy areas, woodland and cutting the grass
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses
- When you get in from outside wash your hands, face and hair, rinse your eyes and change your clothes
- If possible stay indoors when the pollen count is high
- Use Vaseline inside your nose to block inhalation of pollen
- Don't dry washing outside

What treatments should I use?

1. Antihistamine tablets or liquid

Antihistamines block the action of the chemical histamine preventing the symptoms of the allergic reaction from occurring. Examples of antihistamine tablets/liquid are:

- Cetirizine e.g. Becoallergy, Zirtek
- Loratadine e.g. Clarityn
- Acrivastine e.g. Benadryl
- Chlorphenamine e.g. Piriton (may cause drowsiness)

2. Nasal sprays

Steroid nasal sprays suppress the allergic reaction and inflammation of hay fever. They are more effective than antihistamine tablets at preventing and relieving nasal

symptoms. They can be taken in combination with antihistamine tablets.

You have to persist for a minimum of 2 weeks for nasal sprays to take effect. The nasal spray then has to be taken regularly otherwise it will not work.

Examples of steroid nasal sprays are:

- Beconase
- Pirinase

3. *Eye drops*

Eyes drops can control the symptoms of itchy and soreness. Examples of eye drops are:

- Optrex
- Opticrom

When should I speak to a healthcare professional?

- If you are experiencing wheezing, breathlessness or tightness in the chest
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding
- If you have tried a nasal steroid spray regularly for two months alongside other over-the-counter treatments and measures to reduce your pollen exposure and they are having no effect on your symptoms
- If you develop any side effects from the hay fever medicine you are taking

Prescribing of antihistamines by your GP

The latest guidance from the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) is that medication which is easily available over-the-counter in pharmacies or on supermarket shelves should no longer be prescribed. However, there are exceptions for patients who don't have hay fever and who have conditions which require very high dose medication.