

## WHAT IS HAY FEVER

- Hay fever is caused by pollen grains landing on the lining on your nose - it is a misguided reaction where the body thinks that the pollen is harmful (much like a cold virus) and so mounts a response trying to get rid of it. As a result of this response you will start to:
- **sneeze** - to try to expel the pollen out of your nose
- have a **runny nose (or eyes)** - to try to wash it out
- have a **blocked nose** - as the body is trying to slow down the air flow and reduce the amount of pollen that gets into your nose.
- This response can help containing and limiting say a viral infection but with pollen which cannot be removed from the air we breathe this response is inadequate and results in unpleasant **symptoms that last for as long as the pollen is in the air.**
- Furthermore, **this response affects the good functioning of the nose and can also cause asthma symptoms** - because when the nose is blocked people start to breathe through the mouth meaning that rather than being stopped in the nose the pollen will get straight into your lower airways and may cause asthma symptoms!!!

### **There are essentially three types of pollen that cause hay fever**

- **trees** like birch, alder, hazel which start flowering very early in the year - from late January or early February until March-April
- **grasses** which start flowering from late April or early May until mid July
- **weeds and shrubs** which start flowering later in the summer (July-August) and can go until September or October
- These plants **have inconspicuous flowers and produce large amounts of pollen** with small, light grains which float in the air for a long time and are carried away by air currents over long distances.
- The start of the season and the amount of pollen released is very dependent on the weather - the season will start earlier and pollen counts will be higher in years with warmer weather
- Plants **with bright coloured flowers and strong scent do not cause hay fever** - their pollen grains are large, heavy and sticky and they don't float in the air for a long time/ over long distances
- Some people can be allergic to several types of pollens and will have symptoms spanning from early spring to late summer or early autumn!!!

## TIPS FOR KEEPING HAY FEVER UNDER CONTROL

When looking for a hay fever treatment remember that HAY FEVER CANNOT BE CURED and that without treatment you will continue to experience symptoms for as long as the pollen is present in the air we breathe. Therefore whichever treatment measures you use remember these 2 simple rules:

- **TAKE THE TREATMENT EVERY DAY UNTIL THE END OF THE POLLEN SEASON IF YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR SYMPTOMS UNDER CONTROL ALL THE TIME.** All current available treatments only reduce hay fever symptoms not cure it. **Therefore you will only feel better for as long as you take the treatment and will start developing symptoms again if you stop it before the pollen season is over.**
- **NEXT YEAR START TAKING MEDICATION 2-4 WEEKS BEFORE THE START OF THE POLLEN SEASON THAT CAUSES YOUR SYMPTOMS.**
  - Make a note of when your symptoms started this year as a guide for next year. Mark a reminder in your calendar to start taking the treatment 2-4 weeks before that date.

### **1. Non-medicinal measures that help reduce your symptoms without the need to see a doctor**

- **reduce your pollen exposure** - pollen cannot be avoided completely but there are a few

things that can help to reduce the amount of pollen you come in contact with

- **Wash the inside of your nose and eyes regularly to get rid of the pollen stuck on their membranes**
    - for the nose you can use a nasal douching. **Neilmed Sinus Rinse** provides you with a bottle and sachets of saline and bicarbonate which you have to dissolve in water and then wash your nasal passages. It is very effective in getting rid of the pollen and also of the discharge produced by your nose.
      - **As it does not contain any medication you can use it as many times a day as you want.**
      - **You can buy this over the counter in any pharmacy or on-line.**
    - for the eyes you can use artificial tears bought over the counter. Again you can use them as many times a day and as you need.
  - don't sleep with open windows at night - this is an attractive option particularly on hot summer nights but not a good idea as many plants - grasses including - release a wave of pollen in the early hours of the morning; if you have noticed your symptoms being worse during summer nights when you sleep with your window open this is the reason.
  - don't drive with your car windows open
  - don't dry your clothes and bedding outdoors in the summer - they will get loaded with pollen that you will then breathe in and it will trigger your hay fever symptoms
- **stop the pollen from reaching on your nasal lining** - there are various ways in which you can do this:
    - **Vaseline** applied inside your nostrils will trap some of the pollen that you breathe in; there will be less pollen reaching your nasal membranes and so your symptoms may be milder.
    - **Nazaleze or Allergy defence** is a powder made of plant cellulose which squirted into the nose forms a protector jelly film on the nasal lining. This blocks the pollen to directly reach the nasal membranes and will therefore reduce the symptoms of hay fever.
      - You can use this 3-4 times a day; it might be particularly useful before going to bed or before going out in the fields! It is **available over** the counter.

## 2. Medication that you can use to help get rid of the hay fever symptoms

**ANTI-HISTAMINES** are very effective in treating sneezing, itching, runny nose as well as eye symptoms such as itchy, runny eyes. They might also relieve nasal blockage but they are not as effective as nasal steroids for this.

- **you can buy most antihistamines over the counter so you don't need to see a doctor for this**
- **Avoid taking antihistamines like Piriton** - they tend to make people drowsy, tired and reduce attention and concentration (they were shown to cause students to drop their summer exam grades). Also you would have to take it several times a day to be effective.
- Antihistamines like **cetirizine, desloratadine, loratadine, levocetirizine, fexofenadine** cause less sedation and are therefore a better choice. They were shown to improve the ability to concentrate and remember things in people with active hay fever. You only need to take these once a day (although on a bad day you can take up to two tablets a day).
- Antihistamines are also available as a nasal spray or eye drops - you can try these if you don't get relief with oral tablets

**NASAL STEROID SPRAYS** are usually used when antihistamines are not controlling the symptoms completely or for people with more severe symptoms, in particularly severely blocked nose. Beconase is a nasal steroid available over the counter but there are other ones which are only available on prescription

- Be aware that **nasal steroid sprays don't start working immediately** - it takes a few days to feel a significant improvement in symptoms. To help get over this period **you can take a short course of antihistamines together with the nasal spray for the first 7-10 days**. After this you can try to stop the antihistamines - if your symptoms do not get worse you can continue just with the nasal spray.

- You can always add an antihistamine to the steroid spray on the days when your symptoms are worse!
- There is also a combination spray containing a nasal steroid and an antihistamine that your doctor can prescribe if the steroid alone is not effective (but remember first to ensure that you take it correctly !!!)
- **This is how to take your nasal spray**
  - Blow your nose before applying it - or better wash your nose with the Sinus Rinse solution first and wait a few minutes until all water has come out
  - Bend your head slightly forward
  - Squirt the spray in each nostril (if you bend your head backwards you'll spray straight into your throat and swallow the medicine!!!)
  - Avoid sniffing for as long as you can

#### Anti-allergic eye drops

- tablet antihistamines and nasal steroids are usually effective in treating both nose and eyes symptoms but if you still need some extra help for treating the eyes you can use anti allergic eye drops containing antihistamines or cromoglicic acid.
- You can use these even if you are taking a tablet antihistamine or a nasal steroid.
- They need to be used 3-4 times a day to be effective
- You can buy these products over the counter

If you are using several of the treatments above, this is the order in which you should use them:

1. **Neilmed Sinus Rinse** - use it as often as **needed but not in the 1st hour after applying a nasal spray or drops**
2. **Nasal spray/ drops** - you can apply them **10-15 minutes after you have used the nasal wash** to give time to the water to drain well from your nose; see rules above on how to use the spray.
3. **Nasaleze/ Allergy defence** - apply it 15-30 minutes after the nasal spray or drops

#### THINGS THAT YOU SHOULDN'T USE TO TREAT YOUR HAY FEVER

##### Nasal decongestants

- these are available over the counter in form of tablets, nasal or eye drops.
- they can give immediate relief especially with symptoms like nasal blockage but if you use them for more than 3 days they will cause dependence which means that your nose will become severely blocked again as soon as the effect of the drug has worn off and you will need larger and larger amounts to treat the blockage. Ultimately you might end in having your nose severely blocked all the time with the drug not working anymore!!!

##### Honey

- some people take a spoon of honey every day hoping that their body will become tolerant to the pollen. This however will not help your hay fever because it is made of pollen of the brightly coloured plants which as explained above is structurally different from the one that causes allergy. Even if the honey would contain the right pollen, when ingested, the pollen is broken down in the gut in smaller chemicals that would not be able to change the response of our body to pollen towards being tolerant to it (for this to happen the pollen should reach the blood stream in the exact form in which we are ingesting it).

##### Steroid injections

- In the old times when the medication available to treat hay fever was very limited people with severe symptoms were sometimes treated with injections with long acting steroids (Kenalog). However nowadays, when so many new hay fever drugs are available, these steroids are not used anymore because of their risk of causing brittle bones, diabetes and high blood pressure in long term is too high compared to the benefits you are getting out of it.

<b>Product</b>	<b>How to use</b>	<b>Special comments</b>
NeilMed Sinus Rinse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use as often as necessary</li> <li>use 10-15 minutes before applying a nasal spray / drops</li> <li>avoid for 1h after applying the nasal spray/ drops</li> </ul>	
Artificial tears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use as often as necessary</li> <li>avoid immediately before using eye drops</li> <li>avoid for 1h after applying the nasal spray/ drops</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nasal spray (steroid/ combination ) Name:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use ..... puffs in each nostril .....times per day</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eye drops Name:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use ..... drops in each eye..... times per day</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oral Antihistamine Name:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>take ..... tablets..... times per day</li> </ul>	

**, REMEMBER TO TAKE YOUR MEDICATIONS EVERY DAY IF YOU WANT TO REMAIN FREE OF SYMPTOMS!!!**

**IF YOUR ASTHMA SYMPTOMS HAVE ALSO BECOME WORSE, CONTROLLING HAY FEVER CAN HELP IMPROVING ASTHMA!!!**