



Hay Fever – Frequently Asked Question for Patients

1. What is hay fever?

Hay Fever, also known as Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis, is an allergic reaction to pollens. The symptoms are like colds and other upper respiratory infections but do not disappear in the same way as an infection does. Symptoms may last from February / March to late September depending on which pollen an individual is sensitive to as this is when the pollen count is highest. It is usually a self-limiting condition and mild to moderate hay fever can be self-managed. More information on hay fever is available online -

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hay-fever/> and <https://www.allergyuk.org/types-of-allergies/hayfever/>.

2. What things can I do to help relieve my symptoms?

DO	DON'T
Check the pollen forecast - https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/seasonal-advice/pollen-forecast	Spend too much time outside, especially morning and evening when pollen count is highest.
Put petroleum jelly, e.g. Vaseline®, around your nostrils to trap pollen.	Cut grass or walk on grass.
Wear wraparound sunglasses to stop pollen getting into your eyes.	Dry washing outside on the line as pollen can stick to it.
Shower and change clothes after you have been outside to wash pollen off.	
Stay indoors whenever possible, especially when the pollen count is high.	
Keep doors and windows shut as much as possible.	

3. Who can I seek advice from for my hay fever?

Community pharmacy / pharmacists can offer advice and support to individuals with hay fever. Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are registered healthcare professionals. Pharmacy team members all undergo training on over-the-counter medication. They are knowledgeable about the treatments available and can help you decide which is best for you. Treatments available include antihistamine tablets, antihistamine and steroid nose sprays and eye drops.

4. Why am I being asked to purchase medication to treat hay fever?

Self-care and stopping inappropriate prescribing of over the counter (OTC) medicines for minor ailments, such as hayfever, is now part of national plans for the NHS. The local policy in Mid and South Essex can be found [here](#). In general these OTC medications are low-cost items easily available for purchase. Stopping prescribing such items saves the NHS not just the cost of the medicines themselves but other costs through the entire process.

Hay fever is an uncomplicated seasonal condition that can be treated effectively without medical intervention. The OTC medicines available for hay fever are the same as the ones prescribed. They are available at low cost from various places including pharmacies and other retailers. The antihistamine fexofenadine 120mg (also known as the prescription drug, Telfast) is also now available for OTC purchase from many outlets under the brand name of Allevia®.



5. I don't pay for prescriptions – why do I need to purchase my own medication?

All individuals across Mid and South Essex and the rest of England are asked to purchase medicines for their own self-limiting conditions and minor ailments, including seasonal hay fever. This includes those who do not pay for prescriptions due to their age, medical condition, prepayment certificate or other reasons. Hay fever is usually unrelated to the condition for which you have medical exemption and therefore should be purchased rather than prescribed.

6. Are there any non-medication treatments for hay fever?

Locally grown unprocessed honey, where the bees feed on the same pollen that affects you, has been used to help relieve hay fever. This works as your body will naturally form a tolerance from the honey to the pollen. Manuka honey also has anti-allergic properties. Honey should not be given to children under the age of 1. Herbal teas such as nettle, chamomile and liquorice all contain natural anti-oxidants and antihistamines and the warmth of the tea can help clear your nose.

7. What should I do if OTC medication doesn't help with my symptoms?

If you have tried using OTC medication as recommended by your pharmacist and still have symptoms, please go back to the pharmacist for further advice. If you go to your GP practice they may refer you to the pharmacist for a confidential consultation using a system called GP CPCS – GP Community Pharmacist Consultation Service. If the pharmacist determines you need to be seen by a GP following a GP CPCS review (only) the pharmacist will arrange an appointment with your GP for you.

8. My symptoms are not seasonal / I take antihistamines for other reasons as well as hay fever. Do I still need to purchase them?

Individuals who need to take antihistamines all year round can have their medication on prescription at the GPs discretion. Please speak to your GP practice about this. You can, of course, self-purchase if you prefer. It would be cheaper to buy your own antihistamines if you need to pay for prescriptions.

Table of Over The Counter treatments for hay fever

It is always worth shopping around to get the best deals – many places offer discounts if you purchase more than one unit.

Generic Medication	Common brand names (not exhaustive)	Exclusions for OTC sale	Approx cost for 1 month supply*	Comments
Acrivastine 8mg capsules	Benadyl®	Children under 12, Adults over 65, pregnancy, breastfeeding	£16.99	Not included in locally approved list of medicines – should not be prescribed
Cetirizine 10mg tablets	Zirtek®	Children under 6, patients with kidney problems, pregnancy, breastfeeding	as little as £1.99	Shop around, is available in supermarkets and other stores
Cetirizine 1mg/1ml oral solution sugar free	Zirtek® . Piriteze®	Children under 2, patients with kidney problems, pregnancy, breastfeeding	£5.00	
Chlorphenamine 4mg tablets	Piriton®	Children under 6, pregnancy, breastfeeding	£5.89	Sedating, used for acute reactions
Chlorphenamine 2mg/5ml oral solution	Piriton®	Children under 1, children with asthma, children taking monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), advice to avoid in pregnancy, breastfeeding	£5.00	Sedating, used for acute reactions
Fexofenadine 120mg tablets	Allevia®	Children under 12	£10.49	30mg & 180mg strength are only available on prescription
Loratadine 10mg tablets	Clarityn®	Children under 6, pregnancy, breastfeeding	as little as £1.99	Shop around, is available in supermarkets and other stores
Loratadine 5mg/5ml oral solution	Clarityn®	Children under 2, patients with kidney problems, pregnancy, breastfeeding	£5.00	
Sodium cromoglycate 2% eye drops	Opticrom®, Optrex Allergy®	Children under 6, pregnancy, breastfeeding	£5.50	Ensure 10ml size - less expensive
Xylometazoline hydrochloride 0.05%/ Antazoline sulphate 0.5% eye drops	Otrivine-Antistin®	Children under 12, contact lens wearers, contraindicated in patients on MAOIs, pregnancy, breastfeeding	£5.99	Not included in locally approved list of medicines – should not be prescribed
Beclomethasone dipropionate 50mcg/metered dose	Beconase®	Children under 18, pregnancy, breastfeeding	£9.49	
Fluticasone furoate 0.05% nasal spray	Pirinase®	Children under 18, pregnancy, breastfeeding	£15.98	
Mometasone furoate 50mcg/metered dose	Clarinate®	Children under 18, pregnancy, breastfeeding	£13.99	
Xylometazoline hydrochloride 0.1% nasal spray	Otrivine®	Children under 12, caution in pregnancy, breastfeeding, contraindicated in patients on MAOIs	£4.29 / 10ml bottle	Not included in locally approved list of medicines – should not be prescribed

*price from reputable retail and online pharmacies, correct as of April 2022

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