

Hay fever

Hay fever is an allergic reaction to pollen. You will have hay fever symptoms soon after pollen comes into contact with your mouth, nose, eyes and throat.

Pollen is a fine powder that comes from plants. The most common sources of pollen are trees, grass and weeds.

Hay fever is also called seasonal allergic rhinitis.

Hay fever symptoms are usually worse between late March and September. The pollen count is at its highest when the weather is warm, humid and windy.

You can have symptoms for weeks or months, or sometimes all year round.

Hay fever symptoms

Symptoms of hay fever include:

- sneezing and coughing
- a runny or blocked nose
- itchy, red or watery eyes
- itchy throat, mouth, nose and ears
- loss of smell
- pain around your temples and forehead
- headache
- earache
- feeling tired

Hay fever symptoms in children

Hay fever symptoms in children are the same as in adults.

Hay fever usually begins in children between ages 2 and 5. If your child is under 2 and is showing similar symptoms, it may not be hay fever.

With children, sometimes it can be hard to tell if they've got hay fever or a common cold.

There are some ways to spot the difference.

How you know it's hay fever

If your child has hay fever they will not usually have a high temperature or a sore throat.

But they will have:

- symptoms for at least 6 to 8 weeks - a cold will last 1 to 3 weeks
- symptoms at the same time every year (pollen season)
- itchy eyes and nose

Hay fever symptoms ease for some children as they get older. For others, symptoms will disappear altogether.

Hay fever and asthma

If you have hay fever and asthma, you may also have other symptoms.

These include:

- a tight feeling in your chest
- shortness of breath
- a wheeze and cough

Hay fever can make asthma harder to control. Talk to your GP if you are worried about your symptoms.

What you can do to avoid getting symptoms

There's no cure for hay fever and you cannot prevent it. But you can try to avoid pollen when the count is high.

You can also use some of these tips to help keep you or your child symptom free.

Do

- ✓ check the pollen forecast count daily at [Met Éireann](#)
- ✓ put Vaseline around your nostrils to trap pollen
- ✓ wear wraparound sunglasses to stop pollen from getting into your eyes
- ✓ shower and change your clothes after you've been outside to wash the pollen off
- ✓ stay indoors or plan indoor activities for children when the pollen count is high
- ✓ keep windows and doors closed when the pollen count is high

dust with a damp cloth

- ✓ vacuum often
- ✓ be aware that pets can carry pollen into your house

Don't

- ✗ do not cut grass or walk on grass
- ✗ 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 trap pollen

A pharmacist can help with hay fever

Speak to your pharmacist if you have hay fever. They can give advice and suggest the best treatments. Treatments include antihistamine drops, tablets or nasal sprays.

These treatments can help with:

- itchy and watery eyes
- sneezing
- a blocked nose

Ask your pharmacist about an antihistamine for your child. Some antihistamines can make them drowsy.

You can also get a nasal spray to help ease your child's symptoms - but your GP may need to prescribe this.

[Antihistamines](#)

Contact your GP if your symptoms:

- are getting worse
- do not improve after taking medicines from the pharmacy

Also talk to your GP if you're worried your child has allergies - they may send your child for allergy testing to confirm an allergy to pollen.

Treatments from your GP

Your GP may prescribe a nasal spray. These can be a steroid or non-steroid nasal spray. If these and other hay fever treatments do not work, sometimes your GP will refer you to a specialist.

[Seasonal allergic rhinitis](#)

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