

# Hay fever



Hay fever has nothing to do with hay or fever. The medical term is allergic rhinitis. It is most common in spring and fall from airborne mold spores or pollen. Some people have hay fever all year.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Itchy or watery eyes
- Runny, itchy nose
- Congestion
- Sneezing

## CAUSES

Hay fever is a reaction of the upper respiratory tract to allergens.

## TREATMENT

- Antihistamines. For best results, take the antihistamine 30 minutes before going outside. **{Note:}** Some over-the-counter antihistamines can make you more drowsy than prescribed ones. Be careful when driving and operating machinery since some older (first generation) antihistamines can make you drowsy.}
- A decongestant. **{Note:}** Do not give antihistamines, decongestants, and other over-the-counter medicines for colds, coughs, and/or the flu to children less than 2 years old. For children 2 years old and older, follow their doctor's advice.}
- A corticosteroid nasal spray and eye drops, cromolyn sodium, and oral corticosteroids
- Skin tests to find out what things you are allergic to
- Allergy shots

## TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Do you have severe breathing problems or severe wheezing?

NO



YES



**GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE**



Do you have any of these symptoms of an infection?

- Fever
- Green, yellow, or bloody-colored nasal discharge or mucus
- Throbbing facial pain

NO



YES



**SEE DOCTOR**



Do you still have hay fever symptoms when you avoid hay fever triggers? Or, do hay fever symptoms keep you from doing daily activities?

NO



YES



**CALL DOCTOR**



**USE SELF-CARE**





## SELF-CARE

- If you are allergic to pollen and molds, let someone else do outside chores. Mowing the lawn or raking leaves can make you very sick.
- Keep windows and doors shut and stay inside when the pollen count or humidity is high. Midmorning and early evening are sometimes the worst.
- Clean floors with a damp rag or mop rather than dry-dusting or sweeping.
- Use a dehumidifier in your home, especially in the basement, to keep the humidity low, between 30 and 50 percent.
- Avoid tobacco smoke and other air pollutants.
- Don't have pets. If you have a pet, keep it out of the bedroom. When you can, keep the pet outdoors. Wash your hands immediately after petting animals.
- Use an air conditioner or air cleaner in your house, especially in the bedroom. Electronic air filters are better than mechanical ones. Clean the filter often. Or, try a doctor-approved air purifier, especially in the bedroom. Devices with HEPA filters can be very effective in cleaning indoor air.

### To limit dust, mold, and pollen:

- Put a plastic cover on your mattress or cover it completely with an allergen-free mattress cover.
- Sleep with no pillow or with the kind your doctor or health care provider recommends. If you use a pillow, cover it with an allergen-free cover.
- Try not to have stuffed animals kept in the bedroom. If you must, have only one that can be washed. Wash it in hot water once a week.
- Don't dry sheets and blankets outside.
- Use curtains and rugs that can be washed often. Don't use carpeting.
- Dust and vacuum often. Wear a dust filter mask when you do.
- Every week, wash the sheets and blankets on your bed. Wash them in hot water.
- Put an electronic air filter on your furnace or use portable air purifiers.
- Shower or bathe and wash your hair after heavy exposure to pollen, dust, etc.