



ALLERGIC RHINITIS (HAY FEVER)

DEFINITION

Usual Symptoms

- There is a clear nasal discharge with sneezing, sniffing, and nasal itching.
- Symptoms occur during pollen season.
- Similar symptoms occurred during the same month of the previous year.
- Previous confirmation of this diagnosis by a physician is helpful.
- Eye symptoms are commonly associated such as red, watery, itchy, or puffy eyes.
- Sinus or ear congestion is sometimes associated.

Cause

Hay fever is an allergic reaction of the nose (and sinuses) to an inhaled substance. This sensitivity is often inherited. During late April and May the most common offending pollen is from trees. From late May to mid-July, the offending pollen is usually grass. From late August to the first frost, the leading cause of hay fever is ragweed pollen. Although the inhaled substance is usually pollen, it can also be animal dander or other agents your child is allergic to. Hay fever is the most common allergy; more than 15% of the population has it. Common year-round exposures include dust mites, house dust, pet dander, and molds.

Expected Course

This is a chronic condition that will probably recur every year, perhaps for a lifetime. Therefore it is important to learn how to control it.

ALLERGY MEDICATIONS

Revised July 8, 2019

Medications that relieve allergy symptoms

There are two types of medications in this category: Antihistamines and Decongestants.

Antihistamines are the mainstay of allergy treatment. They help with symptoms of sneezing, runny nose, itchy nose, and itchy eyes. The main side effect of most antihistamines is drowsiness. Some of the newer antihistamines do not cause drowsiness. Most people with allergies will need an antihistamine. We recommend the following medications which are available without a prescription (OTC):

Loratadine (Claritin)

Cetirizine (Zyrtec)

Fexofenadine (Allegra)

Decongestants unclog a stuffy nose. They can cause side effects of rapid heart rate and trouble sleeping. If nasal congestion is a significant part of your child's allergy symptoms, he/she can use an antihistamine-decongestant combination. We recommend the following OTC antihistamine/decongestant combinations in children over the age of 4 years:

Loratadine-D (Claritin-D)

Cetirizine-D (Zyrtec-D)

Fexofenadine-D (Allegra-D)

For a decongestant alone, use **Pseudoephedrine** (brand name Sudafed) or **Phenylephrine** (same as brand name Sudafed-PE).

If your child has significant problems with itchy, red, or watery eyes, an antihistamine eye drop can be used. Any of the following OTC eye drops may be helpful: **Zaditor OTC**, **Opcon-A**, **Naphcon-A**, **Vasocon-A**, or **Visine-A**.

Ketotifen Ophthalmic Solution (Alaway, Claritin Eye, or Zyrtec Itchy Eyes)

All of the above medications are available without a prescription. If you have tried one or more of these medications without significant relief, your child may need a prescription medication. You can discuss medication options with your provider.

Medications that prevent/control allergy symptoms

For people with year-round (perennial) allergy symptoms or when symptoms persist for a long period of time or are not controlled by antihistamines, a preventative medication may be needed. The main type of medication in this category is a nasal steroid spray such as **Fluticasone** (same as brand name Flonase), Triamcinolone (Nasacort), or Budesonide (Rhinocort). These medications need to be used daily throughout your child's allergy season(s) to be effective. These medications take a few days to a week to be effective so they should not be used on an as needed basis.

OTHER STRATEGIES

Pollen Removal to Decrease Symptoms of Hay Fever

Pollen tends to collect on the exposed body surfaces and especially in the hair. Shower your child and wash his hair every night before going to bed. Avoid handling pets that have been outside and are probably covered with pollen.

Prevention of Hay Fever Symptoms

Your child's exposure to pollen can be reduced by not going on drives in the country, not sitting by an open car window on necessary drives, not being near someone cutting the grass during pollen season, staying indoors when it is windy or the pollen count is especially high, and closing the windows that face the prevailing winds. If your child's hay fever is especially bad and you don't have air-conditioning, you may wish to take him to an air-conditioned store or theater for a few hours. Avoid feather pillows, pets, farms, stables, and tobacco smoke if any of them seem to bring on symptoms of nasal allergy. For additional advice, see our handout on "Environmental Precautions for Allergies and Asthma"

CALL OUR OFFICE

During regular hours if

- The treatment does not relieve most of the symptoms.
- The secretions become thick green or yellow for more than 1-2 weeks.
- Your child develops sinus pain or pressure.
- Your child is missing any school, work, or social activities because of his allergy symptoms.
- The allergy symptoms keep your child from playing or sleeping despite medication treatment.