

Hay fever



What's in this patient handout?

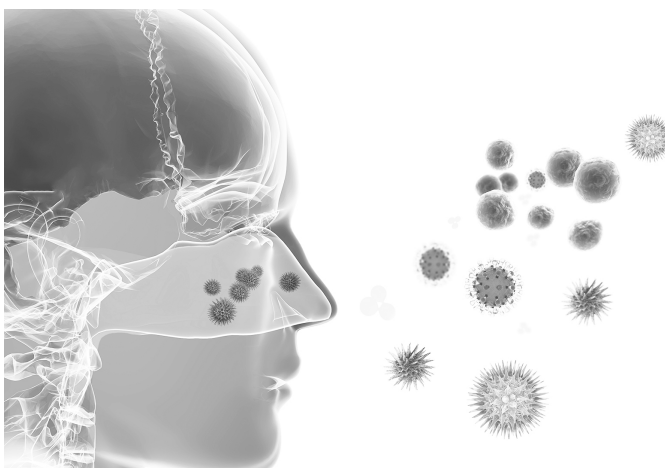
- An overview of Hay fever
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An overview of Hay fever

Hay fever, also known as allergic rhinitis (AR), is the most common type of chronic rhinitis. It is characterised by respiratory symptoms and often associated with asthma and conjunctivitis. AR is a localised inflammatory response to inhaled allergens such as seasonal (e.g. pollen) or year-round (e.g. animal dander, dust mites) triggers. For affected individuals the exposure to these allergens causes inflammation of the nasal mucosa. Depending on the severity of the symptoms, this can significantly impair the quality of life, sleep and performance.

The short term treatment goal for AR is symptom relief and avoidance of the specific allergens is recommended. Pharmaceutical management options include treatment with anti-histamines, steroids, decongestants and allergen immunotherapy.

Diagnosis of AR includes taking the history of signs and symptoms, physical examination and a diagnostic test to identify the specific allergen or trigger. One of the well-known tests is the skin-prick test which introduces several allergens to a patient's skin on the fore-arm or back. The result for an allergen is seen as positive when a wheal-and-flare response appears on the site of exposure (redness of the skin).



Symptoms

Acute

- Runny nose (rhinorrhea)
- Itchy nose
- Sneezing
- Nasal congestion
- Asthma

Subsequent symptoms

- Red, teary and itchy eyes (allergic conjunctivitis)
- Sore throat and coughing
- Puffy eye lids, dark circles under the eyes

Consequences

- Poor quality sleep
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Reduced memory and concentration

Causes

- Seasonal allergens e.g. pollen, grasses, blooming plants
- Permanent or year-round allergens e.g. animal dander, dust mites, mould

Aggravating factors

- Direct exposure to allergen
- Windy conditions
- Mornings when pollen rise and evenings when they settle



Relieving factors

Seasonal triggers

- Stay inside if possible, especially mornings and evenings and keep windows closed
- Use air conditioner or window screen filters
- Wear mask and sunglasses, this might lighten symptoms by providing a physical barrier against air-borne allergens
- Potentially reduced symptom severity on rainy days

Permanent triggers

- Avoid or restrict contact with animals and ensure adequate house cleaning
- Wash bedding in hot water (60°C) and use a vacuum cleaner with a high efficiency particulate air filter
- Use allergen - impermeable covers for bedding
- Keep relative humidity in rooms below 50 percent to avoid mite growth

Treatment options

- **Antihistamine treatment** has been found successful in symptom relief if taken before allergen exposure or at time of maximal symptoms
- **Nasal saline irrigation** to help wash of inhaled allergens
- Decongestants to restrict blood flow to the nose and reduce mucus production
- **Nasal corticosteroid sprays** to reduce inflammation of nasal mucosa and is best used just before exposure to the allergen and taken regularly
- **Allergen immunotherapy** is a long term treatment and works to increase the immune system's tolerance to the allergen
- Acupuncture treatment has shown promising results in symptom relief and is a safe and well tolerated option.

Long term holistic treatment aims

- Support healthy immune system function
- Provide mucosal membrane support for inflamed nasal inner lining

Nutritional and herbal recommendations

Vitamin D

- Ensure adequate levels of vitamin D and supplement if needed

Vitamin C

- Ensure a diet rich in vitamin C
- Foods high in vitamin C: broccoli, brussel sprouts, citrus fruit, peppers, pineapple, paw-paw and blackcurrant

Quercetin

- A dietary flavonoid, might display anti-allergic effects
- Foods high in quercetin: red wine, tea, onions, kale, tomatoes, broccoli, green beans, asparagus, apples and berries

Bromelain

- An enzyme found in pineapple, has an anti-inflammatory effect and is used for hay fever

Albizia

- Albizia is used in Ayurvedic medicine for its anti-allergic activity

Seek Medical Care

Treatment recommendations should be carried out concomitant to, and not replace medical treatment. Please consult your medical doctor for advice with compatibility of nutritional/ herbal recommendation and any medicine you take.