

# Hay fever

Hay fever is a common condition affecting around 10-15% of school age children in the UK each year. Fortunately, a wide range of effective remedies are available without prescription at all good Pharmacies and supermarkets; They are safe and have very predictable profiles with no concerns in medium term use.

The NHS does not have the capacity to issue prescriptions for such items to all children and it is the hope that parents, carers and schools can support young people to reduce the impact these symptoms can have on them.

Here is some standard NHS guidance <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hay-fever/>

Specific medication regimes are usually based on age and clearly stated on labels and packaging, these should not be exceeded without consulting your local Pharmacy or GP first.

## **Tablets and Liquids (oral medications)**

Cetirizine (Zirtek™ Piriteze™), Loratidine (Clarityn™) and Fexofenadine (Telfast™) are all widely available and inexpensive non-sedating antihistamines available in both liquid and tablet form and the precise dosing instructions are clearly stated on the labels and licensed by the Pharmaceutical companies at those doses with no need for prescription. Non-sedating antihistamines should not affect concentration or alertness and are ideally taken each morning or sometimes twice a day if directed to do so based on age, on the label. They are best taken BEFORE symptoms begin and the dose maintained during pollen season.

Chlorpheniramine (Piriton™) is a sedating antihistamine and we would not recommend that during school hours as it is likely to affect performance. It may be used, within the licensed doses on the label at night time if it helps children sleep who would otherwise be awake all night due to symptoms. It is always good idea to wash face and hair before bed to remove pollens.

## **Eyedrops**

Sodium Cromoglycate 2% (Opticrom™) is the only antihistamine eye drop we would recommend and is inexpensive, available over the counter and safe at all ages. They should be used with oral treatments for maximal benefit. We do not recommend 'soothing drops' that do not contain this active ingredient. Please check with your child's optician if they are on other eye drops or wear contact lenses before using them.

## **Nasal sprays**

A variety of steroid nasal sprays are also available over the counter and, based on ages stated and doses on the packaging, they can also be used with the above medications and should be used on a regular basis daily, ideally started ahead of symptoms just prior to the expected season.

We do not have the capacity to issue prescriptions for all young people nor write plans or letters to schools for what is widely acknowledged a very safe and straight forward series of steps and medications to control symptoms for the vast majority of those affected.

We recognise that Hay fever can be a very difficult and disabling condition especially during periods of high pollen counts for some children and young people and we are here to help if the above measures are insufficient. If you and the young person in your care have followed the advice on avoidance, face/hair washing and used medications and symptoms persist, then please contact the surgery for advice.

Dr Dave Kendall

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