

HAY FEVER

(Allergic Rhinitis)

NOLENSVILLE FAMILY MEDICINE
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BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

An allergic response to an allergen in the air. Hay fever affects the eyes, nose, sinuses, throat, and bronchial tubes in the lungs. The name is confusing since hay does not cause an allergic reaction and there is no fever. Attacks flare up in pollen season.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Itching, watery eyes.
- Frequent sneezing; stuffy nose with a clear discharge.
- Itching in the roof of the mouth.
- Wheezing (sometimes).
- Burning in the throat.

CAUSES

- The body's immune system produces antibodies that release a chemical called histamine. Histamine in turn produces swelling and irritation in certain areas (nose, sinuses, eyes).
- Allergens in the air that cause an allergic sensitivity include: Pollen (from weeds, flowers, grasses, and trees), mold, dust, mites, tobacco smoke, and other air pollutants.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Having other allergic reactions, such as eczema or asthma.
- Smoking.
- Spring and autumn. Most plants produce pollen during these seasons.
- Family history of allergies.
- Weak immune system due to drugs or illness.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

There is no way to prevent having allergies. You can take steps to help prevent having symptoms.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Symptoms can be controlled with treatment, but the condition persists over a lifetime. It is usually more troublesome than disabling.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Difficulty in sleeping and chronic fatigue.
- Increased risk for other infections.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms. Medical tests such as blood and allergy skin tests may be recommended, but are usually not required for diagnosis.
- Try to remove as many allergens from your home or the surrounding property area as possible.

- Prepare your bedroom as follows:
 - Empty the room of furniture, rugs or carpet, and drapes or curtains. Clean the walls, woodwork, and floors with a damp mop. Wax the floor.
 - Cover box springs, mattress, and pillows with plastic covers. Use bedclothes that can be washed often.
 - Use throw rugs that can be washed easily.
 - Use wood or plastic chairs, not stuffed chairs.
 - Use window shades or blinds, not drapes/curtains.
 - Use a vacuum cleaner, damp rags, and a damp or oiled mop to clean the bedroom once a week.
- Other preventive measures:
 - Keep windows and doors closed, where possible.
 - Don't handle objects that are very dusty, such as books or stored clothing.
 - Don't keep stuffed animals or toys in the house.
 - Remove all pets (except fish) from the house.
 - Wear a filter face-mask during exposure to allergens, including during housecleaning.
 - Install an air-purification unit in your home's heating and air-conditioning system, preferably a high-efficiency particulate (HEPA) filter.
 - Drive an air-conditioned car.
 - Have someone else mow the lawn.

MEDICATIONS

- You may be prescribed:
 - Antihistamines; decongestants; cortisone eyedrops or nasal spray; cortisone tablets (severe cases only); cromolyn nasal spray; or cromolyn nose drops. These drugs relieve symptoms, but they don't cure hay fever.
 - Desensitization injections for known allergens for severe or year-round cases. Once allergens are known (through skin or blood tests), small amounts are injected over a period of time. This helps block the immune system from releasing the histamine. This process may take months or years for effective results.

ACTIVITY

No limits. Avoid areas with known allergens.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member has severe symptoms of hay fever that are interfering with normal activities.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page