

What is hay fever?

Hay fever is a common condition also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis and affects around 1 in 5 people in the UK. It often runs in families and is more likely to affect people who suffer from asthma and eczema.

It is an allergic condition where the body's immune system overreacts to substances that are usually harmless, for example pollen from grasses, flowers, weeds or trees.

The pollen causes the release of chemical called histamine from cells in the nose, eyes and airways, which cause inflammation. Some people suffer symptoms all year round; they can be allergic to indoor allergens such as house dust mites, pets and indoor moulds. This is called perennial allergic rhinitis.

More information is available at:

www.nhs.uk and www.patient.co.uk

What signs and symptoms do people with Hay fever experience?

Examples may include any of the following:

- Itchy blocked or runny nose
- Red, itchy puffy or watery eyes
- Itchy throat
- Headaches and sinus pain
- Fatigue

What is NHS Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire ICB (BSW ICB)?

The Integrated Care Board (ICB) is responsible for the planning and purchasing of the vast majority of health services across the area - this includes hospital care, mental health and community services.

It works closely with all GP practices across BSW ICB.

Contact us:

Website: <https://bsw.icb.nhs.uk/>

Patient advice and liaison team (PALs)

Patients registered across BSW practices-

Scwcsu.palscomplaints@nhs.net

Patient advice Hay fever

This leaflet explains the availability of hay fever products (antihistamines) across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon & Wiltshire



Why can patients no longer have antihistamine products on prescription?

In February 2017, NHS Bath and North East Somerset Integrated Care Board (ICB) decided to stop funding prescriptions of hay fever products (antihistamines) to all but the most vulnerable patients. This difficult decision was made because of the urgent need to make financial savings in the NHS. BSW ICB support this decision in line with NHS England [Guidance on conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care](#)

Why was this decision made?

Hay fever products are widely available in supermarkets and pharmacies. It is cheaper for patients to buy these products over the counter than it is for the NHS to buy them. This is one way patients can help the NHS – by buying their own hay fever medicine, so the money the NHS saves can be used to fund other treatments.

Managing your hay fever

The severity of symptoms can vary, some people need medication to manage their symptoms and others can manage their condition by avoiding triggers. If treatment is needed, a wide range of medications can be purchased from community pharmacies and supermarkets without seeing a doctor.

What if patients can't get a supply of anti-histamine medication locally?

The ICB has made sure there is a good spread of retail outlets across our county that stock a wide variety of competitively priced antihistamine hay fever medication.

What treatments can I buy?

Speak to a local pharmacist to get advice on the best treatment for your symptoms and always read the patient information leaflet that is included with the medicine.

Examples include:

- **Antihistamine tablets and syrups:** generally effective at controlling symptoms of hay fever.
- **Nasal sprays:** useful if you suffer nasal symptoms and can be used instead of, or in addition to, antihistamine tablets.
- **Eye drops:** if your eye symptoms cannot be controlled with oral antihistamines, eye drops containing Sodium Cromoglicate or Lodoxamide may be useful.
- **Other useful treatments:** simple pain relief (e.g., paracetamol or ibuprofen) can help with headaches and sinus pain. Throat lozenges can help ease tickly throats and palates. Decongestant tablets should relieve blocked noses- always consult a pharmacist if you are on prescribed medication.

How to avoid triggers?

- Keep house and car windows closed, especially when the pollen count is high (early morning between 7am and 9am and evenings between 5pm and 7pm).
- Avoid large, grassy areas, woodland, cutting the grass, pollutants and car fumes.
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses.
- When you get in from outside, wash your hands, face, hair, rinse your eyes and change your clothes.
- If possible, stay indoors when the pollen count is high.
- You can buy pollen filters for car air vents.