



### What is hay fever?

Hay fever is an allergic reaction of the nose (and sinuses) to pollen or another substance in the air.

Symptoms include:

- a clear nasal discharge
- an itchy nose with sneezing and sniffing
- itchy, watery eyes (eye allergies)
- sometimes, sinus or ear congestion.

Hay fever is the most common allergy. More than 15% of people have it.

### What is the cause?

Although pollen is usually the cause of hay fever, it can also be caused by animal dander or something else your child is allergic to. This allergic sensitivity is often inherited.

During late April and May the most common pollen causing hay fever is from trees. From late May to mid-July, the pollen is usually from grass. From late August to the first frost, the leading cause of hay fever is ragweed pollen.

### How can I take care of my child?

- **Oral antihistamine medicine**

The best drug for hay fever is an antihistamine. It will relieve nose and eye symptoms. Your child's antihistamine is \_\_\_\_\_. Give \_\_\_\_\_ every \_\_\_\_\_ hours.

Symptoms clear up faster if antihistamines are given at the first sign of sneezing or sniffing. For children with daily symptoms, the best control is attained if antihistamines are taken continuously throughout the pollen season.

The main side effect of antihistamines is drowsiness. Your child should become tolerant of the regular dosage in 1 to 2 weeks. Newer prescription antihistamines cause much less drowsiness and are FDA approved for use in most children. Examples are Allegra, Zyrtec, and Claritin.

- **Prescription steroid nasal sprays for prevention**

If not helped by antihistamines, severe hay fever can usually be controlled by prescription steroid nasal sprays. Allergy shots are usually not needed.

Nasal sprays must be used when the nose is not dripping. Give your child an antihistamine to stop the dripping before you use the spray. Your child's nasal spray is \_\_\_\_\_.

- **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 he goes to bed. Your child should avoid handling pets that have been outside and are probably covered with pollen. Vacuum bedroom at least 2-3 times a week. Use HEPA air filter.

- **Eye allergies associated with hay fever**

If your child also has itchy, watery eyes, wash his face and eyelids to remove pollen. Then apply a cold wet cloth to the eyelids for 10 minutes. An oral antihistamine will usually bring the eye symptoms under control.

### **When should I call my child's healthcare provider?**

Call during office hours if:

- Your child's symptoms are not controlled in 2 days with antihistamines.
- Your child develops sinus pain, pressure, or fever higher than 101.
- You have other concerns or questions.