

Homeopathy and Hayfever

Hay fever is an allergic response to pollen that affects the mucous membranes of the nose, eyes and air passages. Symptoms include watery discharge from the nose and eyes sneezing and irritability.

This can be caused by the pollen of various grasses and plants, timothy grass and rye grass cause most problems in the summer and tree pollens peak in the spring; the pollen is air-borne and can be blown over long distances in the breeze. It is a seasonal allergy.

Many of the symptoms of hay fever are similar to those of the common cold, colds are often associated with mild fever and are usually gone within a week, while hay fever sufferers often have a feeling of being 'wiped out' for weeks on end. Most cases of hay fever occur in the spring and summer when the antigen is grass pollen. Pollen is recognised as a foreign body- an antigen. Like an infectious molecule- such as a virus- it stimulates the immune system to generate antibodies. Because of the action of these antibodies, the mucus membranes in the nose and surrounding areas release histamine and other substances, which are normally produced in response to infection. The role of histamine is to dilate local blood vessels, making them more permeable, and thereby helping components of the immune system to get to work clearing up any irritation. As a result, some people show the classic symptoms of itching, sneezing, a streaming or blocked nose and itchy, red, watery eyes.

Around thirty per cent of people also experience wheezing or breathlessness, this is known as 'pollen asthma.'

Conventional treatments consist of desensitisation injections, these have shown to be of limited value; anti histamine tablets and nasal sprays give some temporary relief and cause side effects of drowsiness and effect co-ordination. In severe cases steroid preparations are prescribed, these can depress more important immune function, and tend to deepen the imbalance in the natural defence system.

Homeopathic remedies can be used along side or instead of conventional medicines. Your doctor or pharmacist's recommended treatment maybe greatly enhanced by the addition of a homeopathic remedy, do let him know if this is the case. Practitioners think of homeopathic medicine as complementary as well as a valuable alternative to orthodox medicine. Some drugs, steroids for example- may slow down the homeopathic response, so far none appear to stop it.

Remedies are easy to administer usually in the form of powders, granules, tablets or pills. They have a neutral or sweetish taste, which makes them easy to take

especially by children. In acute conditions the response to a homeopathic remedy can be astonishingly quick. In chronic (longer lasting) conditions cure may take longer since there may be some bodily changes and weakness, these would need to be dealt with by a qualified homeopath. Practitioners may well recommend starting to treat before the hay fever season starts in order to strengthen the patient's constitution and reduce their sensitivity to pollens.

This process has been likened to peeling an onion-removing one layer after another until the centre root cause is reached. A further advantage of homeopathic treatments is that no side effects occur, on some occasions it is possible that a patient's symptoms may worsen for a short while as the body rebalances itself. In addition to being safe and easy to give, free of side effects and often-quick acting in acute illness, homeopathic remedies are inexpensive; an average course of treatment costs very little in comparison with some modern drug regimes.

SOME USEFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR HAY FEVER SUFFERERS

Try to avoid allergens;

- Don't walk in long grass
- Keep bedroom and car windows closed as much as possible in June/July
- On dry hot days go out mid morning when the pollen count is down.
- Early evenings the pollen count is returning to ground level and at it's worst, try to stay in at this time.
- Avoid grass and hedge cuttings.
- Wearing sunglasses will help to keep pollen out of your eyes.

Self help measures

- Avoid contact with cigarette smoke; wearing perfume is not a good idea.
- Itchy eyes can be bathed in a solution of Euphrasia. Put one drop in an eyebath of water. NEVER put tincture directly into your eye.
- Try splashing your face with cold water, or sniffing cold water up through your nostrils to soothe the inflamed membranes.
- Cut out all dairy products and wheat if you can for the duration of the hay fever season. These are the most likely food allergens, which may aggravate your symptoms.
- If you have to blow your nose, do so gently. Hard blowing can burst the grains of pollen, which increases their irritant effect.
- Some sufferers find extra Vitamin C and magnesium food supplements can be helpful.

Hay fever is a deep-seated condition, which requires constitutional treatment from a qualified Homeopath. Orthodox medical treatment can manage the condition with powerful drugs that have a number of harmful side effects but constitutional

homeopathic treatment over two or three seasons may cure the condition completely.

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