

Hay fever

Pollen allergy, colloquially referred to as «hay fever», is an allergic illness whose disposition is mostly inherited. The body reacts to an actually harmless substance (pollen proteins) with an excessive defensive reaction.

Hay fever is the most frequent allergic illness in Europe. The allergy usually appears in school age or older. About 1.4 million people in Switzerland are allergic to pollen.

Symptoms

The strict seasonal appearance of symptoms corresponding to the flowering time of triggering plants is typical for hay fever. The most frequent symptoms are: itchy, runny or congested nose, sneezing, itchy and watery eyes as well as itching in the palate, nose or ears. A pollen allergy can develop into allergic asthma over time (allergic march).

Therapy

There are three different possibilities to alleviate the symptoms of hay fever:

- **Prophylaxis:** avoidance/prevention of pollen exposure (see practical tips for everyday life).
- **Symptomatic treatment:** antihistamines and anti-allergic agents in the form of nasal sprays, eye drops and/or tablets/drops are used in the acute stage. Depending on the type of complaint, the use of cortisone preparations is indicated in any case.
- **Immunotherapy:** the only possibility to improve a pollen allergy on a long-term and causal basis is desensitisation. This therapy requires an allergological clarification.

Hay fever and sports

Children who suffer from hay fever are allowed to engage in sports. Indoor sports are better suited than outdoor activities. But naturally pollen allergy sufferers may also be active outdoors. To relieve the symptoms they can take an antihistamine (tablet/drops) approx. one hour before the sporting activity. But beware: some preparations have a calming effect and thereby reduce responsiveness.

Practical Tips for Everyday Life

Some simple tips to reduce the problems of persons suffering from allergic rhinitis due to pollen:

- Air your rooms in the early morning hours and/or during rather long rainy periods only or have pollen screens installed on the windows (and in the car).
- Turbulences (e.g. fan) should be avoided in closed living spaces in order not to raise pollen lying on the floor.
- Do not dry freshly laundered clothes outside.
- Wash your child's hair and face in the evening.
- Clothes that have been worn during the day should be taken off before going to bed and should not be stored in the children's room.
- Regularly mow the lawn in your garden to keep it short. Avoid mowing the lawn or vacuuming in the child's presence.
- If possible, only short stay outdoors in case of high pollen concentration in the air (= nice, windy weather).
- Wear sunglasses with side protection and headgear.
- Check the pollen forecast: www.pollenundallergie.ch or .../Polleninfo/pollenprognose

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