



Hay fever

This information sheet explains some changes to how you can obtain treatments to relieve the symptoms of hay fever. These changes have been made by Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group, the NHS organisation that plans and pays for health services in west Hertfordshire.

What is hay fever and what causes it?

Hay fever (also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis) is a common condition in the UK and usually occurs during the spring or summer. It is caused when the body overreacts to substances (allergens) such as pollen from grass or flowers. This leads to symptoms such as sneezing, itchy eyes, runny nose or a blocked nose.

The severity of symptoms can vary from person to person but most of the common symptoms can be treated using a variety of methods such as steroid nose sprays, antihistamine tablets and eye drops. Symptoms often lessen over the years.



What changes have been made and how will this affect me?

Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is no longer funding prescriptions on the local NHS for products that treat short-term hay fever symptoms.

If you are experiencing common seasonal hay fever symptoms you should no longer go to your GP to get a prescription. Instead you should seek support from a pharmacist and/or buy over-the-counter (OTC) medication to treat your symptoms from a local pharmacy or supermarket.

Your local pharmacist is skilled to provide safe medical advice. They will be able to advise you on the most appropriate treatment for your symptoms and can also suggest other non-medicated ways of controlling your condition. They will also be able to advise when you do actually need to see a doctor for your symptoms. You can also visit: www.nhs.uk/conditions/hay-fever

Why has this change been made?

The local NHS is under pressure to make sure resources are shared fairly amongst the local population. This is a difficult balance to achieve, but we believe there is a wide range of OTC medicines available to treat hay fever in pharmacies and supermarkets, which makes them readily accessible for patients to purchase without people needing to see a GP. We also hope this will encourage patients to take more ownership of their health.

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