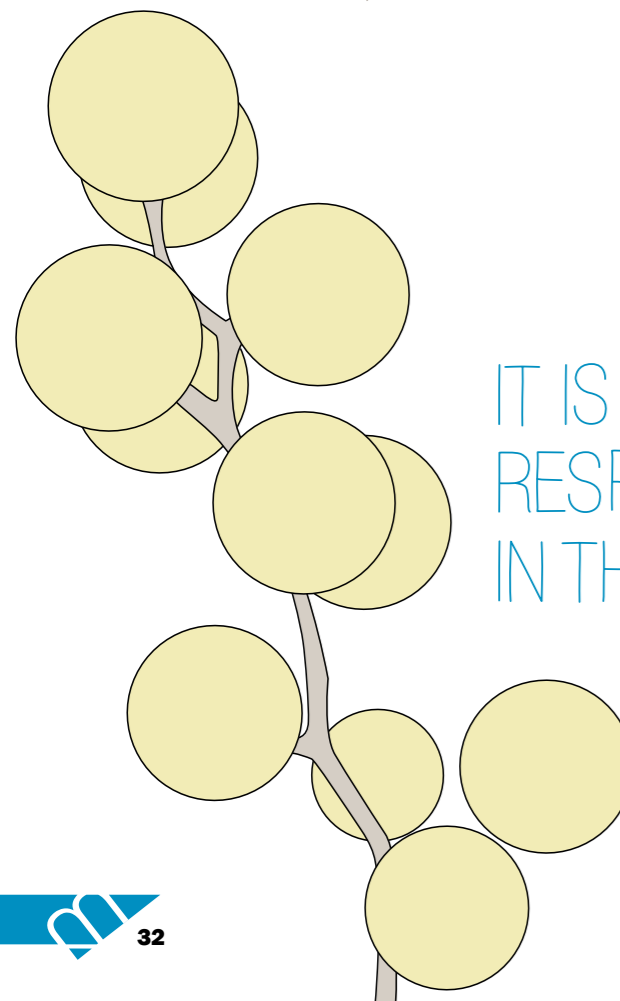


HAY FEVER

HEALTHY, WEALTHY & WISE



It's the time of year when you or some of your customers will be suffering from allergies.

The telltale itchy, puffy, watery eyes and red, stuffy nose signal changes in the seasons in homes and workplaces across the country.

What these people suffer from is allergic rhinitis, or hay fever. The medical name for this condition refers to stuffy and itchy nose ('rhin-'), the most common symptom.

Hay fever is an allergic reaction. It is your immune system's response to foreign material in the air you breathe. Hay fever usually refers to allergies to outdoor, airborne materials such as pollens and molds.

IT IS YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM'S RESPONSE TO FOREIGN MATERIAL IN THE AIR YOU BREATHE.

About 15-20% of the population has some degree of hay fever. It is found equally in both men and women.

Usually hay fever is seasonal, but it can last all year long if the allergen stays throughout the year.

CAUSES

Hay fever, like all allergic reactions, is caused by allergens, foreign "invaders" that enter your body by inhalation, by swallowing, or through your skin.

In hay fever, the allergens are airborne substances that enter your airways (mouth, nose, throat, and lungs) via your breathing and the linings of your eyes and sometimes ears via direct contact.

Most of the time it is difficult to identify a specific allergen.

Once these allergens come in contact with your airway, the white blood cells of your immune system produce antibodies to the offending substance. This overreaction to a harmless substance is often called a hypersensitivity reaction.

The antibody, called immunoglobulin E, or IgE, is stored on special cells called mast cells.

When the antibody comes in contact with the corresponding antigen, they promote release of chemicals and hormones called "mediators." Histamine is an example of a mediator.

It is the effects of these mediators on organs and other cells that cause the symptoms of the allergic reaction, in this case hay fever.

The most common allergens in hay fever are pollens. Pollen is small particles released by flowering plants. It is moved around by wind to other plants of the same species, which it fertilizes so that the plant can bloom again.

The other common allergens in hay fever are molds. Molds are a type of fungus that has no stems, roots, or leaves. Mold spores float through the air like pollen until they find a hospitable environment to grow. Unlike pollen, however, molds do not have a season.

Molds grow both outdoors and indoors. Outdoors, they thrive in soil, vegetation, and rotting wood. Indoors, molds (usually called mildew) live in places where air does not circulate freely, such as attics and basements, moist places such as bathrooms, and places where foods are stored, prepared, or discarded.

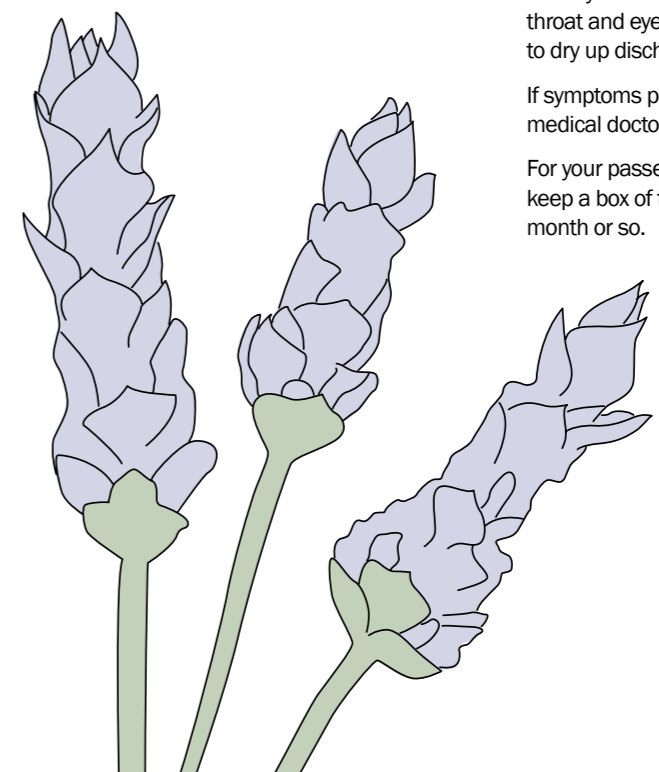
The pollen and mold counts at which people develop allergic symptoms vary quite a lot by individual.

RISK FACTORS FOR HAY FEVER

- Family members with hay fever.
- Repeated exposure to the allergen.
- Other allergic conditions such as eczema or asthma.
- Nasal polyps (small noncancerous growths in the lining of the nose).
- The allergens that cause symptoms in an individual as he or she ages. Symptoms decrease in some allergy sufferers, but not all, as they grow older.
- Bodily changes of pregnancy may make hay fever worse.

SYMPTOMS

- Sneezing.
- Runny nose (clear, thin discharge).
- Congested (stuffy) nose.
- Postnasal drip.
- Sensation of plugged ear(s).
- Watery, bloodshot eyes.
- Itching of nose, soft palate, ear canal, eyes, and/or skin.
- Fatigue.
- Trouble sleeping.



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Supporting your immune system nutritionally may help you better manage your hay fever.

Start by making sure you eat lots of fresh fruit and vegetables every day, and also include fresh nuts and seeds in your diet on a regular basis. That means you'll be getting good levels of antioxidants, particularly vitamins C and E.

High levels of vitamin E appear to offer some protection from hay fever, and are also associated with a decreased tendency to become sensitised to allergens. Research also indicates that taking additional vitamin E in high doses (up to 1200IU per day, in conjunction with other hay fever treatment), may reduce the severity of nasal hay fever symptoms. Researchers believe that the antioxidant actions of vitamin E may help to explain this effect by helping to reduce the body's overall level of immune inflammation. Vitamin E also has effects on histamine levels in the body.

Similarly, vitamin C helps to prevent the secretion of histamine, and aids your body in detoxifying it. We also know that high levels of histamine are associated with low levels of vitamin C, so it's important to keep up your intake of this important nutrient. In an experimental setting very high doses (2g) have also been shown to accelerate recovery time from histamine exposure in allergic rhinitis sufferers.

Other natural therapies to relieve hay fever could include vitamin A for maintenance of healthy mucous membranes of the nose, throat and eyes and and fenugreek also help to dry up discharge.

If symptoms persist you should see your medical doctor.

For your passengers – show sympathy – and keep a box of tissues available for the next month or so.