



For most people, the thought of spring summons imagery of sunshine, green grass and daffodils. Yet for many New Zealanders spring also means hay fever, and the onslaught of stuffy noses, sneezing and itchy watery eyes. Approximately 20% of New Zealanders suffer from seasonal allergic rhinitis, commonly known as hay fever.¹

How do we get hay fever?

Hay fever is caused by atmospheric allergens such as pollen, dust and spring mould spores in people who are allergic to these substances. It usually occurs in spring or summer due to the pollen generated from plants at this time of year.

Although it is unlikely we inherit allergies to a specific allergen, a person's tendency to become allergic is inherited. Children are much more likely to develop allergies if their parents have allergies, even if only one parent is predisposed to allergies.



¹ Allergy New Zealand (2008) Rhinitis and hay fever (pamphlet) Allergy New Zealand, Auckland.



Common symptoms of hay fever

- Stuffy or running nose
- Bouts of sneezing
- Itchy eyes, nose, roof of mouth, or throat
- Watery eyes
- Ear fullness or popping, frequent earaches or ear infections
- Dizziness or nausea
- Reddened pebbly lining in the lower eyelids
- Dark circles under the eyes

Testing for hay fever

Skin testing is the most common method used to test for allergic reactions. A small amount of the suspected allergen is injected under the patient's skin to see if a red lump or 'wheal' presents. Blood tests are another way to determine if you have a pollen allergy.

