

The recent warmer weather is a reminder that summer is approaching and with it, the opportunity for many service users to get outdoors, enjoy the sunshine and boost their vitamin D levels.

However, for those with COPD, asthma or other chronic respiratory conditions, this can increase the risk of serious complications if they also suffer from hay fever.

Hay fever is an allergic reaction to pollen released into the air by plants and trees. Local inflammatory allergic reactions take place as a response to nasal contact with this pollen in the air and most types of pollen can cause a reaction.

Different types of pollen are present at different times which explains why most people suffer hay fever only intermittently. For example, tree pollens are most common from February to June whilst grass pollen is most prevalent from May to July and weed pollen from June to September.

Symptoms of hay fever include sneezing or coughing, a runny or blocked nose, itchy eyes, tiredness, irritation of the throat and nose and headaches. Episodes of hay fever can also increase the likelihood of breathing difficulties and even prevent sufferers from being able to undertake simple, everyday activities. Although there's currently no cure for hay fever, there are many simple steps you can take to help our service users when the pollen count is high.

### **Help Your Service Users with COPD and Asthma with These 4 Tips to Managing Hay Fever**

1. **Check the Pollen Count:** It may seem obvious but avoiding times when the pollen count is high is one of the most important steps to take in minimising the effects of hay fever. The pollen count is likely to be higher on dry, sunny days, particularly later in the day when any overnight moisture has passed so encourage your service users prone to hay fever to avoid being outdoors at these times.
  2. **Reduce Pollen Levels:** Steps such as regular damp dusting, avoiding fresh flowers in their homes and using a vacuum cleaner with a special HEPA filter will all reduce the amount of pollen in their home and protect our service users from unnecessary and potentially harmful exposure.
  3. **Use Protection:** Simple measures including putting Vaseline around the nostrils to trap pollen, wearing wraparound sunglasses to prevent pollen from entering the eyes and changing clothes after sitting outdoors can all help to reduce the risk of hay fever symptoms arising.
  4. **Make Use of Hay Fever Treatments:** Many hay fever sufferers will already have preferred remedies, particularly anti-histamine tablets, drop or nasal sprays. Ensure that support is provided to use these effectively and that the timing of any doses is timed to coincide with symptoms.
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