

# Your allergic rhinitis management plan

Name .....

Date of birth .....

Date.....

You have been prescribed the following treatment:

## Oral medication

Name of medication	Strength	Amount	How often

## Nasal treatment

Name of medication	How much	How often

## Eye drops

Name of medication	Amount	How often

## What is allergic rhinitis?

Rhinitis means inflammation of the lining of the nose. The common symptoms associated with this are an itchy nose, red eyes, watery discharge from the nose and/or eyes, a blocked nose and sneezing. There are two main types of allergic rhinitis:

### **Seasonal allergic rhinitis** (also known as hay fever)






This is caused by allergens (pollen) from grasses and trees. It often affects children of school age, and while most people think it is a summer complaint, the pollen season in the UK actually starts during spring.


### **Perennial allergic rhinitis**

This is when symptoms are experienced all year round. It can be easily mistaken for unusually persistent 'colds'. The symptoms can occur quickly after exposure to an allergen and are often triggered by allergens found in the home such as house dust mites, mould and pets.

## When should you start taking your treatments?

Your rhinitis treatments are particularly useful if you begin taking them before exposure to the allergen. Below is a table detailing UK pollen season:

	Jan	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	Septembe	October	November	December
GRASS												
TREE												

 The green symbol shows when it is best to start taking your treatments. The black line shows you the length of the typical pollen season, and the blue box is the peak of the season.

House dust mites are present in the home all year round, and you may find that your symptoms are worse in the late autumn and winter. This is the time of year when we have central heating on and windows shut, making the home a warm and damp place that house dust mites prefer. Some patients require their treatments just during these late autumn and winter months, and some need to take them throughout the year.

## Rhinitis treatments and how to use them

### **Antihistamines**

During an allergic reaction, the immune system releases histamine which can lead to swelling of the tissue in the nasal passage and can be responsible for the itchy feeling. Antihistamines work by blocking the effect of the histamines.

These can be in liquid form for younger children, and tablets for older children. These medicines are safe, and although they used to make people drowsy, modern antihistamines rarely have that side effect. Your doctor or nurse will advise on which type of antihistamine is best for you.

### **Leukotriene receptor antagonist (montelukast)**

This medicine also helps to control inflammation in your airways. It is taken by mouth once a day. If you have been given the granules, these can either be taken as they are, or mixed with a small amount of cold or room-temperature soft food (for example, yoghurt). This medication can sometimes cause side effects – see the manufacturer's leaflet for more information.

### **Nasal sprays and drops**

These are used to deliver antihistamines and steroids directly into the nasal passages. Nasal antihistamines help with the symptoms of itching and sneezing, while steroids are used to control the inflammation and can help relieve eye symptoms.

Nasal sprays should be used every day to manage symptoms. A lack of symptoms means the treatment is working and should be continued.

Training is important because the nose spray needs to be sprayed in a particular part of the nose for the medication to be effective. When used correctly, nose sprays can prove very effective for a lot of children.

When using a nasal spray, lean forwards so that the nozzle is gently just inside each nostril in turn. The nozzle should be aimed diagonally outward towards the outside wall of the nose. The spray needs to hit the nasal lining to be most effective. Please try not to sniff during, or immediately after, the spray is used.

For an instructional video, visit,

**w:** [www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/nasal-spray/](http://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/nasal-spray/)

### **Saline sprays and nasal douching**

Salt water (saline) can be used in the form of a nasal spray or a pump. It is used to wash away any mucous or allergens that may be inside the nose and causing irritation.

### **Eye drops**

Eye drops can be very useful if eye symptoms are one of the main problems of allergic rhinitis. Many eye drops contain cromoglycate, which works by blocking the responses of the cells that release the histamine during an allergic reaction.

To safely use eye drops:

- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- It is easier to use the drops if you are lying down. It is important to be still while you use them. You may need help from an adult, especially if you are quite young. One adult can help you be still, while another gives the drops.
- **For older children**, gently pull the lower lid out and squeeze the bottle gently so that one drop goes into the pocket that is formed.
- **In small children and babies**, place the drop into the inner corner of the eye. This is easier with the eye open, but the liquid will still drain onto the eye, even with a closed eye if you can hold your child's head still for a few seconds. Hold the bottle as close to the eye as possible, **without the tip touching your child's eye**.
- After using eye drops, you should keep your eyes closed for as long as you can (five seconds if possible) so that the eye drop doesn't spill out. If you think the drop didn't go into the eye, you can repeat the process but do not try more than twice.

For an instructional video and further information, visit, [w: www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/types-of-medicines](http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/types-of-medicines) and click on the links under the heading 'Eye drops'.

## **Non-medicine management for pollen allergy**

There are several things that can be done to help minimise your exposure to pollens:

- Monitor pollen forecasts each day and be aware when the pollen count is high (generally on warm, dry days). Rain washes pollen from the air so pollen counts should be lower on cooler, wet days.
- On high-pollen days, shower and wash your hair after arriving home, and change your clothing (as pollen is virtually indestructible unless wet, so will stay on hair, body and clothing).
- Avoid drying washing on a clothes-line outside when pollen counts are high.
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses when outside.
- Nasal allergen barrier balms may be useful. When they are applied around the nostrils, they can help to prevent allergens entering the nose and triggering symptoms.
- Nasal rinses with a normal saline solution (also known as saline douching or irrigation) are available to wash away allergens from the nose. These can be used as often as needed and in addition to prescribed or over-the-counter medications.
- Try to keep windows closed when pollen is being released in the early mornings, and in the evening when the air cools and pollens that have been carried up into the air begin to fall to ground level again.



## **Non-medicine management of dust mite allergy**

Allergy to house dust mites is very common and can trigger allergic reactions such as rhinitis. Cutting down mite numbers may reduce these reactions, here are some things you and your family can do at home to achieve this:

- Washing fabrics at a minimum of 60C kills house dust mites, so use bed linen that can be washed at this temperature at least every two weeks.
- Stuffed soft toys can also contain house dust mites, so try to keep the toys away from the bed if possible. About once a month, put soft toys in the freezer for six hours to kill the house dust mites.
- Cover all mattresses, duvets and pillows in your bedroom with micro-porous membrane covers. These covers need to be wiped clean with a damp cloth each time the bedding is changed.
- House dust mites prefer warm, damp homes, so open windows or vents in kitchens and bathrooms during and after cooking, washing and bathing. Avoid drying clothes indoors, especially in the bedrooms and living rooms. If you have to dry clothes indoors, open a window and close the door to the room where the damp clothes are.
- Reduce the number of items on which dust can build up, especially if they are difficult to clean, for example, keep ornaments in display cabinets, place books in closed cases, and put clothes and other objects in cupboards or drawers.
- Regularly clean surfaces/objects where dust collects using a damp cloth or an 'e-cloth' (dry cloths will not pick up all of the dust and will let a lot of it back into the air).



## Contact details

If you have any further questions regarding your prescribed rhinitis treatment, you can contact the allergy nurses at Evelina London Children's Hospital, **t:** 020 7188 9783.

Alternatively you can book a telephone appointment with an allergy nurse specialist online at, **w:** [www.zesty.co.uk/practices/childrens-allergy-nurse-helpline](http://www.zesty.co.uk/practices/childrens-allergy-nurse-helpline)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at Evelina London, please visit **w:** [www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline. **t:** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm, **e:** [letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111 **w:** [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

**e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## **Language and accessible support services**

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## **NHS Choices**

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **Was this leaflet useful?**

We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form,

**w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets), or

**e:** [patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk)

**Leaflet number: 4801/VER1**

Date published: September 2019

Review date: September 2022

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A list of sources is available on request