

insight

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The Sport Issue

A snapshot of **sport in Brighton** by the men and women that play it, from **Sussex County Cricket** and **sea swimming** to **endurance cycling** and **ultimate fighting**. **PLUS:** Brighton's Fashion Weekend, interviews with **Oliver James** and **Joan as Police Woman**, summer sizzlers for the **barbecue** from Due South, and the best of the **Graduate Art Show**...

Not to be sneezed at

There is nothing worse than being struck down by a tidal wave of sinus congestion just as the warm weather rolls in. **Susie Perry** sniffs out a few effective natural remedies and therapies to ease your misery

Hay fever affects around 15–20% of adults between June and September when levels of pollen are at their highest. For most people it's a reaction to grass pollens but tree pollens and mould spores can also be significant triggers.

Ha choo!

Symptoms of hay fever include watery, bloodshot eyes, itchy eyes, sneezing, runny nose, blocked nose, itchy nose and ears and headache. As pollen makes contact with your nose, immune cells release large amounts of histamine which activates an allergic reaction. Your nose and eyes then go into hyper secretion, producing lots of sticky mucus and liquid in an attempt to flush out or sneeze out the offending pollens. All this drama for something that's so small we can't even see it!

Identify your triggers

There are two ways to find out what's responsible for your symptoms. A kind of rough and ready way is to look at a pollen calendar. Visit www.zirtek.co.uk, they have an excellent UK pollen, grasses and mould calendar for you to do your own detective work. For more accurate diagnosis, have an Inhalant Allergy Test with IWDL on Tel. 020 8336 7750. It costs £140 but tests for antibody reactions to 26 tree, grass, weed and mould pollens along with animal hair and dust mites.

Get protected

For maximum protection, it is important to take action steps at least 2-3 months before the season starts. The reduction in the severity of hay fever symptoms is generally cumulative, easing a little more each year if the steps are followed year after year.

The dairy and grains connection

Factors which can make you more susceptible to hay fever attacks each year include food intolerances to dairy products and some grains. Dairy foods encourage nasal congestion and grains like rice, oats, wheat, barley and rye contain proteins similar to those found in grass pollens. Avoiding grains and dairy products from your diet can help to ease your hay fever; see a nutritional therapist to help guide you through this process.

Something in the air

Hay fever is aggravated by air pollution. Factors such as traffic fumes and cigarette smoke actually heighten nasal sensitivity making hay fever more of a risk. Unfortunately there's not a lot you can do about this, at least the smoking ban will help to lessen the risk when you're out enjoying a drink at the pub.

Healing herbs

There are two herbs, Meadowsweet and Golden Seal, which are fantastic for

soothing itchy airways and reducing the inflammation that occurs with hay fever. Both these herbs are native to the UK and are in season during the hay fever months making them a great natural remedy. Liquorice is also useful to help support the immune system. Visit Neal's Yard for a combination tincture. Remember you need to start this before the season hits.

Helpful homeopathy

There are lots of great homeopathic remedies that help to reduce the symptoms severity. Get in contact with Helios Homeopathic Pharmacy in Tunbridge Wells on Tel: 01892 537 254 for advice on remedies. Homeopathy can be an effective way of desensitizing yourself to the pollen or grass that you are reacting to, so it's well worth visiting a homeopath.

Natural anti-histamine foods

Vitamin C is nature's natural anti-histamine which helps to calm down the allergic reaction involved in hay fever. Foods rich in vitamin C include green leafy vegetables and summer berries – redcurrants, blackcurrants, blackberries, blueberries and black cherries. You can always supplement with 500mg of Vitamin C 3-4 times a day. Also Quercetin helps slow down the release of histamine helping to get your symptoms under control so it's another worthwhile supplement.

Susie Perry is a nutritional therapist