



Heading off hay fever this summer

Dr Jacqueline Mardon discusses homeopathic medicines that can help hay fever sufferers

Some swift preventive action may be called for at this time of year for sufferers of seasonal allergic rhinitis, also known as hay fever. Spring is starting later after our prolonged, cold winter and it may not be too late to take a few doses of Mixed Grass pollens (30c or 200c), which are best taken about a month before you expect your symptoms to come on. If you are someone who has a worsening of rhinitis towards the end of June, then this may be due to Timothy Grass pollens and taking three separate doses at the end of May could be a helpful prevention.

I would recommend a consultation with a homeopathic practitioner to discuss your problem, in particular if it is severe or prolonged and really affecting your life a lot. However, I believe there are different “local” homeopathic remedies, which could be of use depending on the kind of symptoms you suffer from. It may be that more than one remedy seems to be right at different times and it can be hard to choose for oneself, but I hope the following hints and pointers are useful.

Conventional medicine

With symptom-relief kind of treatment, I would really hope that you could largely avoid use of conventional antihistamine tablets or steroid nasal sprays – although these are very commonly

available, they do have potential side-effects and are not beneficial to everyone, and unfortunately as many people experience, any benefits they do have may decline with longer-term use.

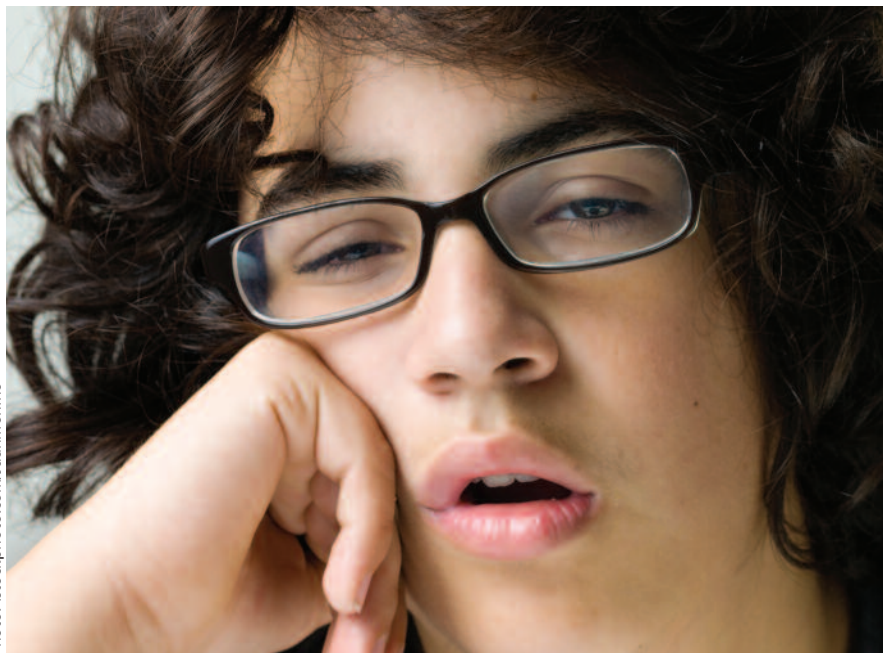
Homeopathic medicine choice

If the main focus of distress is itch, in the nostrils and strikingly the roof of the mouth, which makes you feel like rubbing your tongue up over it – a strange gymnastics! – then the remedy *Wyethia* is an option (an alternative

name for it is “Poison Weed” which confirms what a nasty and unpleasant effect these symptoms have).

Another medicine to consider when there is an unusual itch is *Arundo*, which is made from an Italian grass. The nose runs and the person may have lost their sense of smell and there may even be a cough and “chestiness” too. Itching is distressingly inside the ears and you may feel burning.

Apis I have found particularly helpful in children with hayfever who have



intense and dramatic swelling around their eyelids, which really puff up and look baggy, giving a very distinct and disturbing, almost bug-like appearance. Apis is made from the honey bee, another association with summer. The eyes in fact “sting” and the delicate tissues around the eye are very red, swollen and sensitive to touch although cold compresses may be soothing. The swelling and redness can come on very rapidly, for example after a child has been playing in the grass, and this is one of the fairly rare times when I would feel like tapping a stranger on the shoulder to suggest a homeopathic medicine! In my experience it works effectively and quickly and I would suggest low potencies such as 6c repeated frequently as needed in the acute case.

A different eye complaint may be extreme itching of the eyelids, which can really seem intolerable. Ambrosia, a beautiful name, is also known as ragweed, may be a help for this very distressing and otherwise hard-to-treat symptom. The eyes will typically be watering too, with the other symptoms, such as running nose. There may be nose bleeds too and a “stuffed-up” feeling in the nose and head.

Anyone who has peeled an onion will recognise this next medicine, which is *Allium cepa*, the red onion. It is commonly tried as a self-help in hay fever as it reflects a typical picture for many people of streaming eyes, which are usually however not stinging or irritated, and a running nose which is irritating to the nostrils. There may be some relief to be out in the open air and generally worse for being cooped up in a warm room.

Sabadilla is a remedy where by contrast, the person with hay fever prefers to be cosseted indoors in the warm and may feel worse in the open air. Strong smells of flowers or garlic may make them worse. There can also be itching in the nose and at the back of the throat. Eyes can run too. Sneezing is the strongest characteristic of this remedy and it can be in great noisy, violent and prolonged bouts, maybe 20 sneezes at a time! I have seen Sabadilla be a great comfort and relief to sufferers from this



Photo: istockphoto.com/Jaime Duplass

affliction – and their families!

The medicines I have mentioned so far are given orally in low potency usually such as 6C, but where there is usually a long season of discomfort with the seasonal rhinitis, giving the remedy as 30C twice a week over this time could be tried. Euphrasia is a very useful and effective remedy which can be taken orally but also is used quite commonly as eyedrops and this can be a good alternative to other (conventional) eyedrops. Another name is “Eye-bright” and the hay fever focus is on the eyes with a lot of burning sensation, running of the eyes, intolerance to bright light with

sometimes a lot of blinking and screwing up of the eyes. Although the nose may also run, this does not usually irritate the nostrils or around the nose and upper lip (in contrast to *Allium cepa* where the nose can really nip). I have found very helpful orally but some people may prefer trying eye-drops instead or as a back-up for really severe days.

Homeopathic consultation

For over-the-counter remedies like these and self-prescribing, some advice from a homeopathic pharmacist can be of great value and it is certainly a condition which is very common and for which, I am glad to say, help is available. The further option of a full consultation with a homeopathic practitioner should symptoms remain very difficult to shift, could be a next step on review at the end of the season. Support with constitutional prescribing and isopathy, which I have described elsewhere, may then come into its own.



Jacqueline Mardon MBBS MPhil MRCGP MFHom is a specialist in homeopathic medicine at Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital, where she also runs the allergy clinic.