

# Maple



# View

## Medical Practice

**Newsletter Spring 2016**

### **Spring has sprung!**

The Daffodils and Bluebells are out and the hedgerows are bursting back into life. Spring is a time of renewal but it does bring its challenges for hay fever sufferers.

**Hay fever, also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis, affects one in four people in the UK and is mainly caused by grass pollen.**

Hay fever is a type of allergy. It happens when your body makes antibodies in response to certain triggers, such as pollen.

The charity Allergy UK estimates that nearly 18 million people have hay fever in the UK. It's most common in children, particularly teenagers, but you can develop hay fever at any age.

The symptoms usually include sneezing, itchy and watery eyes, and a stuffy nose.

### ***What causes hay fever?***

In Britain, hay fever is mainly caused by grass pollen. Around 95% of hay fever sufferers are allergic to grass pollen.

Tree pollen can cause hay fever too. Around a quarter of hay fever sufferers are allergic to tree pollen. Mould spores and weed pollen can also trigger symptoms.

This is because your body sees these pollens as a threat, so your hay fever symptoms are caused by your immune system attempting to prevent the spread of what it mistakenly thinks is a harmful organism.

Check the Met Office pollen calendar online to see if you're allergic to tree, grass or weed pollen.

The pollens that cause hay fever vary from person to person and from region to region. The amount of pollen in the air will affect how bad your hay fever is.

It's more likely that there will be more pollen in the air on hot, dry, windy days than on cool, damp, rainy days. Research shows that pollution, such as cigarette smoke or car exhaust fumes, also makes some allergies worse. Pollen can also attach to clothing, hair and pets' fur, which means it can be hard to avoid even indoors.

### ***When is hay fever worst?***

The time of year when you begin to experience hay fever symptoms depends on the types of pollen you're allergic to.

Trees release their pollen in March to early May, while grasses release pollen from late May to early August. Weeds and certain shrubs release their pollen in late summer.

The hay fever season can therefore last from March to October. And if you're unlucky enough to be allergic to more than one type of pollen, you may only have just two or three months without symptoms in the winter before the cycle starts again.

### ***How can I avoid getting hay fever?***

If your parents are allergic to something, you're more likely to develop an allergy too (it doesn't have to be the same allergy as your parents).

If you smoke while you're pregnant or smoke around your child, your child could be more likely to develop an allergy. Not smoking and eating a healthy diet can limit the chances of your children being affected

### ***Hay fever and asthma***

Speak to your GP or pharmacist before you decide on a hay fever treatment. It's particularly important to speak to your GP if you have asthma. Hay fever often makes asthma symptoms worse. If this happens, you may need to increase the dosage of your asthma medication.

### ***Hay fever in pregnancy***

Hay fever during pregnancy can be a particular problem. Hormonal changes make nasal congestion more common during pregnancy, and this often gets worse during hay fever season. Pregnant women are also advised not to take some hay fever medicines.

### ***Tips to relieve hay fever***

Avoiding exposure to pollen is the best way to reduce the allergic symptoms of hay fever:

- Keep windows shut at night and first thing in the morning.
- Stay indoors when the pollen count is high (between 50 and 150).
- Wear wraparound sunglasses.
- Put some petroleum jelly (Vaseline) or another nasal blocker just inside your nostrils to trap some of the pollen.
- Don't mow the grass or sit in fields or large areas of grass.
- Wash your hands and face regularly.
- Avoid exposure to other allergens, such as pet fur, or environmental irritants, such as insect sprays or tobacco smoke.

### *Treating hay fever*

As with most allergies, the best way to control hay fever is to avoid the triggers. But it's difficult to avoid pollen, particularly during the summer.

Even straightforward hay fever can be debilitating, causing runny eyes, sleepless nights, a bunged-up nose and headaches.

A range of over-the-counter products can treat the symptoms of hay fever, including tablets, nasal sprays and eye drops.

Antihistamines are the usual treatment for the main symptoms, such as itchy, watery eyes and a runny nose, while steroid nasal sprays are the main treatment for a stuffy nose. Your pharmacist can help advise you on which treatment is best for you.

## **Why Eye Tests Are Important**

Regular eye tests are important because your eyes don't usually hurt when something is wrong. A sight test is a vital health check for your eyes that can pick up early signs of eye conditions before you're aware of any symptoms – many of which can be treated if found early enough.

### *What your eye test will show*

A sight test will show if you need to:

- get glasses for the first time
- change your current glasses

A sight test will also include a general health check that can pick up early signs of eye disease before you're aware of any symptoms. Some health conditions can affect the eyes such as:

- **Diabetes**

Diabetes is a lifelong condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high.

There are two main types of diabetes – type 1 and type 2.

Diabetes can cause serious long-term health problems. It's the most common cause of vision loss and blindness in people of working age. Everyone with diabetes aged 12 or over should be invited to have their eyes screened once a year for diabetic retinopathy.

Diabetes is also responsible for most cases of kidney failure and lower limb amputation (other than accidents).

People with diabetes are up to five times more likely to have cardiovascular disease (such as a stroke) than those without diabetes.

- **Macular degeneration**

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a painless eye condition that causes you to lose central vision, usually in both eyes. Central vision is what you see when you focus straight ahead. In AMD, this vision becomes increasingly blurred, which means:

Reading becomes difficult

Colours appear less vibrant

People's faces are difficult to recognise

This sight loss usually happens gradually over time, although it can sometimes be rapid. AMD doesn't affect your peripheral vision (side vision), which means it will not cause complete blindness.

- **Glaucoma**

Glaucoma is a condition which can affect sight, usually due to build up of pressure within the eye. Glaucoma often affects both eyes, usually to varying degrees. One eye may develop glaucoma quicker than the other. The eyeball contains a fluid called aqueous humour which is constantly produced by the eye, with any excess drained through tubes. Glaucoma develops when the fluid cannot drain properly and pressure builds up, known as the intraocular pressure. This can damage the optic nerve (which connects the eye to the brain) and the nerve fibres from the retina (the light-sensitive nerve tissue that lines the back of the eye).

### **Did you have difficulty getting an appointment today?**

In February Maple View had 92 patients who did not attend their booked appointments with either the doctor or the nurse. These appointments could have been booked by people who genuinely wanted and needed to be seen. There is an average of 95+ appointments per month that are wasted this way. As a result we will now be running monthly reports and writing to people who have missed their appointments and we have implemented the following policy:

- If you fail to attend appointments without informing us we will write to you asking if you could inform the practice if you are unable to attend your appointment.
- If you fail to attend on 3 occasions throughout a 12 month period for appointments you may be removed from the practice list and have to find an alternative GP practice.

We hope that this will ensure that those people who genuinely need to see a gp will have more access to these missed appointments.



If you receive a text message to remind you that you have an appointment you may cancel the appointment by simply texting back ‘CANCEL’. This automatically reopens the appointment time so that it may be used for someone else. Please only use the word CANCEL as this is an automated system and will not register requests to change the appointment or an explanation of non-attendance.

### **NHS Friends and Family Test**

This test is a way of gathering your feedback, so we can continually review our service. It is based on one simple question:

“How likely are you to recommend our GP practice to friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment?”

Your feedback will help us learn more about what you think of your experience – what you like and what you think we could improve. Ultimately, you’re helping us to make changes that will ensure we can offer the best possible care.

The Friends and Family Test cards and box to put them in are located on the table opposite reception. Alternatively, we have a suggestion box located in the waiting room.

## **STUDENT LIFE AT MAPLE VIEW**

Maple View is a training practice and we have medical students from Warwick University who are mentored by our experienced GP's

By observing consultations and recording medical histories the students gain valuable experience to support their studies

Patient's will always be asked their permission to have a student present during their consultation and are free to refuse consent

We greatly appreciate our patient's valuable input into the education of our future generation of doctors

If you have an ongoing medical issue and would be willing to participate in a workshop with a student/s please ask to speak with Tracey on receptions as she coordinates the student appointments.

## **MAPLE VIEW FROM A STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE**

(Kindly written by Paul Chapman Who was previously on a work placement at Maple View)

“Seeing real people allows me to see how a health condition affects a person’s life, rather than the biology”



“With the support of the GP’s and Practice staff I learn the best And most efficient ways of Helping a patient”



**Real people have real problems, and no amount of reading can help me appreciate that. Talking with patients is the best way to learn that**

**“As a medical student, I chose medicine to learn about illness and more importantly, what I can do about it. With the support of the practice staff I move closer to that goal each day”**

**“I am hugely thankful to anyone who allows me/a student to talk with them about their health problems – medicine is about people, not textbooks”**