

#HELPMYNHS



Help my GP

A visit to your GP is sometimes unavoidable...but do you really need to see them?

Some people visit their GP when they could have cared for themselves at home or received care elsewhere. This makes GP surgeries very busy and means you and other people may have to wait longer when you do need to see a GP.

You can find advice on what you can do to avoid having to see your GP in the leaflet below:

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- [NHS choices](#)
- [Sign up for GP online Services](#)
- [Go to your local Pharmacy](#)
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Be Self Care Aware

Hayfever

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Stay well

There are many ways you can stay well to help you stop becoming ill:

- **Having your flu jab and other vaccinations** is a quick and easy way to stop you becoming ill and spreading illnesses to others.
- **Keeping your first aid kit and medicines cabinet well stocked at home** will help you treat illnesses quickly yourself and mean you do not need to see your doctor.
- **Stay warm, particularly during the winter months** as cold weather can affect your health.
- **Sleeping well, exercising regularly and eating the right food** will help you stay healthy and stop you becoming ill.

You can get lots more information on staying well at www.nhs.uk/staywell

NHS Choices

[NHS Choices](#) is the biggest health website in the UK and is tried and trusted by doctors. It helps you:

- Check your symptoms to see if you need further treatment
- Better understand your health so you can stay well
- Find out what services are available if you need treatment or support
- Get advice on how to care for yourself when you do become ill or unwell

Sign up for GP online services

Sign up to GP online services and you'll be able to use a website or app without leaving your home to:

- Book or cancel appointments online with a GP or nurse
- Order repeat prescriptions online

- View parts of your GP record, including information about medication, allergies, vaccinations, previous illnesses and test results
- View clinical correspondence such as hospital discharge summaries, outpatient appointment letters and referral letters

The service is free and available to everyone who is registered with a GP. The services available to you will depend on the online system your GP practice uses. You can ask your practice about getting online access to their services.

Go to your local pharmacy

Pharmacists have the knowledge and skills to help and advise you on treating common conditions, and how to use the medicines you have at home. They can inform you of local services that are available. There are many local pharmacies in high streets, some supermarkets and in shopping centres. You don't need an appointment to see the pharmacist, just pop in.

Pharmacies do more than dispense prescriptions and medicines. Many also offer:

- Advice on bugs and viruses, minor ailments, tummy troubles, skin conditions and allergies
- Women's health advice
- Treatment for common childhood illnesses and infections
- Health checks (blood pressure, cholesterol or blood glucose testing)
- Screening (chlamydia and allergy screenings)
- Emergency contraception
- Pregnancy testing
- Stop smoking treatment
- Weight management advice

Many pharmacies are open late nights and at the weekend, which is convenient for people who work and if you or any member of your family feels unwell.

Details of opening times can be found at: www.nhs.uk/chemist

Order repeat prescriptions on time

Make sure you order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time so you don't have to rush to your GP at the last minute. This is especially important before holiday periods.

Buy common medicines over-the-counter

Consider buying some common medicines at your local pharmacy or shop rather than getting them on prescription. It will be quicker for you to get the medicine and free up time for GP appointments that can be used for other people with serious health problems.

Examples of what can be purchased from your local pharmacy or supermarket are:

- Allergy medicines
- Simple pain killers like paracetamol and ibuprofen
- Sore throat, coughs, colds and flu medications
- Anti-diarrhoea medication
- Rehydration salts
- First aid kit including plasters and bandages
- Thermometer

The doctor will see you now...but are you ready for your appointment?

If you do need to see your doctor, it is important that you prepare for the appointment to help you and your GP get the most out of your time together. Here are ten practical things you can do:

1. Sign up for GP online services to book appointments without having to phone
2. Turn up to appointments on time and cancel appointments you don't need to ensure you and others get the most time possible with their GP
3. Ask for longer appointments if you have more than one problem to give you more time to talk them through.
4. Write down your symptoms and when they started/occurred so you can tell your GP exactly what the issue is
5. Write down any questions and worries you want to ask the GP so you do not forget
6. Bring a list of medication you are taking and any other relevant documents to help your GP know everything you are taking
7. Tell your GP about the most important things first, don't leave your main concern to the end
8. Bring a friend or carer if you need support so they can help you understand or explain what the doctor is telling you
9. Don't be afraid to ask your GP to explain if you do not understand what they say – make sure you know the next steps before you leave the room
10. Consider seeing a practice nurse who can often deal with your concern without you having to wait to see a GP - just ask

Hayfever

Hay fever is a common condition also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis and affects around 1 in 5 people on the UK. It often runs in families and is more likely to affect people who suffer from asthma or eczema.

It is an allergic condition where the body's immune system overreacts to substances that are usually harmless, for example pollen from grasses, flowers or trees. The pollen causes the release of chemical called histamine from cells in the nose, eyes and airways, which causes inflammation.

What are the symptoms?

- ✓ sneezing and coughing
- ✓ a runny or blocked nose
- ✓ itchy, red or watery eyes
- ✓ itchy throat, mouth, nose and ears
- ✓ loss of smell
- ✓ pain around your temples and forehead
- ✓ headache
- ✓ earache
- ✓ feeling tired

How to treat hay fever yourself

There's currently no cure for hay fever and you can't prevent it. But you can do things to ease your symptoms when the pollen count is high.

Do

- ✓ Put Vaseline around your nostrils to trap pollen
- ✓ wear wraparound sunglasses to stop pollen getting into your eyes
- ✓ shower and change your clothes after you've been outside to wash pollen off
- ✓ stay indoors whenever possible
- ✓ keep windows and doors shut as much as possible
- ✓ vacuum regularly and dust with a damp cloth
- ✓ buy a pollen filter for the air vents in your car and a vacuum cleaner with a special HEPA filter

Don't

- ✗ cut grass or walk on grass
- ✗ spend too much time outside
- ✗ keep fresh flowers in the house
- ✗ smoke or be around smoke – it makes your symptoms worse
- ✗ dry clothes outside – they can catch pollen
- ✗ let pets into the house if possible – they can carry pollen indoors

What can I do to manage it?

The severity of symptoms can vary, some people need medication to manage their symptoms and others can manage the condition by avoiding triggers.

If treatment is needed a wide range of medicines can be purchased from your local community pharmacy without seeing a doctor.

What treatments can I buy?

Speak to your local community pharmacy to get advice on the best treatment for your symptoms and always read the patient information leaflet that is included with the medicine.

Examples of products available to buy include:

- ✓ Antihistamine tablets and syrup are generally effective at controlling symptoms of hay fever
- ✓ Nasal sprays are useful if you suffer nasal symptoms and can be used instead of or in addition to antihistamine tablets
- ✓ Ear Drops are useful if your eye symptoms are not controlled by antihistamines
- ✓ Simple pain relief like paracetamol can help with headaches and sinus pain.

Over the Counter Medicines

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Staying well in hot weather

Most of us welcome hot weather, but when it's too hot for too long there are health risks. If a heatwave hits this summer, make sure the hot weather doesn't harm you or anyone you know.

Why is a heatwave a problem?

The main risks posed by a heatwave are:

- [dehydration](#) (not having enough water)
- overheating, which can make symptoms worse for people who already have problems with their heart or breathing
- [heat exhaustion and heatstroke](#)

Who is most at risk?

A heatwave can affect anyone, but the most vulnerable people are:

- older people, especially those over 75
- babies and young children
- people with a serious chronic condition, especially heart or breathing problems
- people with mobility problems – for example, people with Parkinson's disease or who have had a stroke
- people with serious mental health problems
- people on certain medications, including those that affect sweating and temperature control
- people who misuse alcohol or drugs
- people who are physically active – for example, labourers or those doing sports

Tips for coping in hot weather

- Shut windows and pull down the shades when it is hotter outside. You can open the windows for ventilation when it is cooler.
- Avoid the heat: stay out of the sun and don't go out between 11am and 3pm (the hottest part of the day) if you're vulnerable to the effects of heat.
- Keep rooms cool by using shades or reflective material outside the windows. If this isn't possible, use light-coloured curtains and keep them closed (metallic blinds and dark curtains can make the room hotter).
- Have cool baths or showers, and splash yourself with cool water.
- Drink cold drinks regularly, such as water and diluted fruit juice. Avoid excess alcohol, caffeine (tea, coffee and cola) or drinks high in sugar.

- Listen to alerts on the radio, TV and social media about keeping cool.
- Plan ahead to make sure you have enough supplies, such as food, water and any medications you need.
- Identify the coolest room in the house so you know where to go to keep cool.
- Wear loose, cool clothing, and a hat and sunglasses if you go outdoors.
- Check up on friends, relatives and neighbours who may be less able to look after themselves.

If you have concerns about an uncomfortably hot house that is affecting your health or someone else's, get medical advice.

You can also get help from the environmental health office at your local authority. They can inspect a home for hazards to health, including excess heat. Visit GOV.UK to [find your local authority](#).

How do I know if someone needs help?

Seek help from a GP or contact [NHS 111](#) if someone is feeling unwell and shows symptoms

of:

- breathlessness
- chest pain
- confusion
- [intense thirst](#)
- weakness
- dizziness
- cramps which get worse or don't go away

Get the person somewhere cool to rest. Give them plenty of fluids to drink.